

BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG

PCZONE

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ISSUE 162 CHRISTMAS 2005

DEATH OR GLORY!

CALL OF DUTY 2

Exclusive review and demo!

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Out of this world
review of the epic Elite-beater

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In which year
were the
D-Day landings?



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CHRISTMAS 2005



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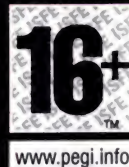
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PCZONE

COVER STORY

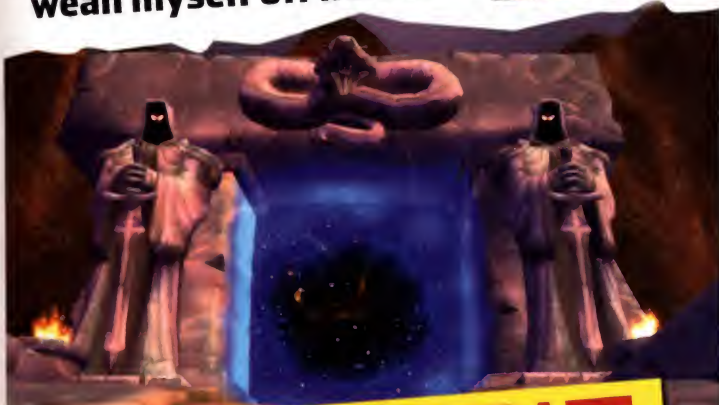
48

CALL OF DUTY 2

Can Infinity Ward pull it off again?
Massive exclusive review of the sequel
to the greatest war shooter of all time!

DOMINIK DIAMOND 146

Videogames are so
addictive, I used them to
wean myself off heroin



WORLD OF WARCRAFT:
THE BURNING CRUSADE

ZONE BORROWS A
CUP OF SUGAR FROM
THE BLOOD ELVES

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WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



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THE BURNING CRUSADE
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Too busy? PC ZONE in 55 words...
Authenticity in Prince Of Persia. Messing with boom mikes
and trays of gravel. Movie madness with Shenannysgoats.
MAME Academy is the pun that won't die. Korda joins the
Supertest. Prez getting lost in space. Hill getting lost on the
touchline. Will getting lost in history and Dominik just plain
losing Far Cry. That's your lot.



CHRISTMAS GIFTS

I LOVE CHRISTMAS, but there's nothing worse – apart from cycling couriers and famine – than getting a crappy present. One particularly bad Yuletide from my childhood was awash with tears after my Merlin electronic game machine refused to work, forcing me to torture my little brother until he gave me his Starbird (if you're under 30, replace 'Merlin' with 'GameBoy' and 'Starbird' with 'mobile phone').

Luckily for you, PC ZONE is here to ensure that when Father Christmas breaks and enters your dwelling on Dec 25, he'll leave behind an empty sherry glass, a half-eaten mince pie, trampled-in reindeer droppings and a copy of *Call Of Duty 2*, *The Movies*, *Quake 4*, *Civ IV*, *F.E.A.R.*, *Black & White 2* and *X3: Reunion*. How? Well, it's easy – you just have to let your mum/dad/girlfriend/wife/partner/care assistant (delete as applicable) know what you really want for Chrimbo...

First, leave this mag open at the contents page in a prominent position, with the games you want highlighted with a red marker pen. Second, grab the startlingly-good free book given away with this issue – *The Ultimate Guide to PC Gaming 2006* – and read aloud, in a clear unfaltering voice at dinner PC ZONE's pick of the top ten Christmas games. Third, padlock all the food cupboards in your house, hide any pets and screech in a high-pitched voice until they agree to your demands.

If that doesn't do the trick, no matter – there's always our Freeplay section (page 109), which this month has 174.3 hours of free gaming delights. Good luck, and enjoy the best PC ZONE reviews issue ever...

Jamie Sefton

Jamie Sefton, editor



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140 LOOKING BACK Call Of Duty



'Beautiful. Me and two sluts' I murmur to myself

STEVE HILL'S NEVERQUEST

135



FREEPLAYHOWTO...

Become a master at PES 5

Look out Sven - Jamie 'The Gunner' Sorfline brings you the best PESS tactics

No X-cess

Cal down dear!

Ball Trap

Greatest Fan

PS2 Roolz

Role Play

Good Lob

High Spirits

FREE GAMES!

109 **FREEPLAY** Because free PC gaming goes far beyond idiotic yetis hitting penguins with a stick. Well, quite a way...

STRATEGIC TACTICAL COMMAND. OR JUST SHOOT THEM YOURSELF.



The greatness of the Advance Wars series comes to the big screen with a twist! Jump into the trenches and lead your troops through real-time, 3-D combat. Set the strategy or pull the trigger yourself. Either way, it's world war, and you get to decide the outcome.

Cube Magazine: 9.0 out of 10 - Star Game NGC Magazine: 90%



OUT 9TH DECEMBER



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This is a classic action-adventure game which we described as 'a near-seamless' gaming experience... Ubisoft has kissed a frog and it's turned into a prince'. **PC ZONE** verdict 84%



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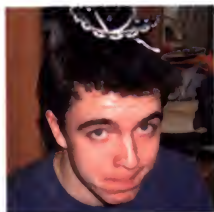
Closing date: December 8, 2005

UPFRONT



MEET THE TEAM

Getting away with it since 1993



STEVE HOGARTY

STAFF WRITER

AGE 18 (and a half)

LIKES Potatoes, Guinness

DISLIKES Contraception,

Stereotyping

FANCIES The BBC news laydee

FAVOURITE GAME *Frontier: Elite II*

PLAYING NOW? *F.E.A.R.*

Nobody really knows where Irish Steve came from – we just arrived one morning to find him sitting at a desk. Sefton says we can keep him as long as we promise to feed him and walk him every day, but instead we throw stones at him and make him say things like 'bejaysus' and 'fucking gobshite' until we're satisfied. Despite his Celtic heritage, he's completely avoided any tea-making duties – a feat largely attributed to the fact that Dave 'Make Me Some Tea You Worthless Sack Of Crap' Woods is no longer about. Steve's best party trick is reminding Sefton that he's almost twice his age.



WILL PORTER

News Editor

Consumed by *Civ IV* dreams, Porter (the 'young' sobriquet has now been transferred to Hogarty) has begun badgering co-workers with plans for getting revenge on Caesar. Go away!

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

COD2 and *Civilization IV*



SUZY WALLACE

Disc Editor

Now safely out of the hurricane season in Mexico, Sooze is getting reacquainted with Excel, PEGI and the BBFC. Recently, she snubbed Jamiroquai at a motor show. Who wouldn't?

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

Fahrenheit



JAMIE SEFTON

Editor

Jetting around the world playing *Pro Evo 5*, Sefton has been living the high life this month. Luckily, the day-to-day drudgery of making a magazine is always here to bring him down to earth.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

PES5 and *Quake 4*



MARTIN KORDA

Freelance Giant

Now that his Hollywood dreaming is over, the Kordinator is back doing what he does best – crushing us puny mortals in his giant arms and demanding to be paid in meat.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

Rome: Total War and *Quake 4*



PAUL PRESLEY

Section Editor

Now that baby-related lack of sleep is a permanent fixture, Prezzer's flights of fancy have entered a whole new level of unintelligibility. Good job a recent home move hasn't added to the stress at all.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

The Movies and *X3: Reunion*



PAVEL BARTER

Undercover Reporter

This month, Pavel's been in shock after buying a round for six people in Dublin's Temple Bar (makes Dubai look cheap), and has appeared as a chicken zombie in Troma's new movie *Poultrygeist*.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?

Fahrenheit, *F.E.A.R.* and *B&W2*

STUFF THAT'S HELPED US THIS MONTH... Cockroach-free greasy spoons, European confectionery, icy cocktails and banana skins
STUFF THAT'S BEEN OF NO HELP WHATSOEVER... Missing emails to America, broken tube lines, leaky roofs and car alarms

STUFF WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

NORTH & SOUTH	55 Mins	Classic gaming from back in the day
NEW ALIENWARES	23 Mins	Both a spanking 'Dark Side' office machine and our art chap's new laptop. Both as heavy as f***
BABY FOOD	5 Mins	Little Yuna is now onto mushed carrot and doing fine, thank you very much
BULLFROG VS LIONHEAD	110 Mins	Which was better? Suzy's extensive <i>Populous</i> tactics beat Prezzer's <i>Movie</i> -making any day
WANKER	7 Min	The history of the word. Not used in WWII apparently
THE JACKSON TWO	40 Mins	Will was shocked to discover 'Fighting Fantasy' Steve isn't the same as 'GURPS' Steve
SERENITY	124 Mins	Joss Whedon – murderer
GRANT COLLIER	18 Mins	Not Barney Collier from <i>Mission: Impossible</i> . Sorry, Prez
ICE BARS	66 Mins	The temptation to lick is almost unbearable
THE MOVIES	215 Mins	<i>Shennarygoats</i> is truly the stuff of legends

WIN!

Tiny Compo. Give us the correct answer to the mini-question on the cover and you might win some fabbo prizes. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: Tiny Compo (162), PC ZONE, Futura, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP. The first correct entry won from the competition gullet wins. Closing date: December 7, 2005. The winner of issue 160's Tiny Compo was Mr Mark Ryan of Hants, who knew that Ian Brown had a hit with the song *FEAR*. Well done you.

GENERAL COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS: 1. Only completed entries received before the closing date will be entered. 2. Winners will be notified by post. 3. No cash alternative. 4. Prizes not necessarily as shown. 5. No correspondence will be entered into. 6. The editor's decision is final. 7. Responsibility cannot be accepted for lost or undelivered entries. 8. Competitions are not open to readers outside the UK or employees of Future or its affiliated companies, their families, agents or anyone professionally connected with the competition. Phew!

LETTERS

Letters or lettuces? We prefer letters here...



WAR STORY

While driving through Normandy up to Cherbourg this September, I suddenly found myself recognising places I'd never seen before – especially a church. I suddenly realised that I'd defended it playing Sgt Baker (and got blown up about 20 times doing it) in *Brothers In Arms: Road To Hill 30*.

As my girlfriend and I drove on, we came upon memorials to the American airborne and more places that were eerily familiar. As a result, we decided to stop at Utah beach, because for the first time, it meant a little more to me than a war film.

Are such war games immoral? Of course not. It's only a game and if it made

me stop just once and offer up a little respect and thanks for all those who fought and died for our freedom, how can that be wrong? Great mag, keep it up.

Lee Curran

We've had quite a collection of emails replying to my 'Moral Maze' ed's column in last issue, where I asked if war games such as *Call Of Duty 2* could be considered immoral and disrespectful of the soldiers and ordinary folk who suffered and died in them. The vast majority think that titles based on real conflicts are absolutely fine, for exactly the reason Lee describes above. They're just entertainment, right?

SMART OR SMUT?

I've been a subscriber to *PC ZONE* for a few years now, but lately I've found the magazine insulting and way below what I consider as acceptable. I'm referring to the recent contributions by Dominik Diamond, with this month's example being "for the first time in my life I'm being paid to wank off", followed by more references to porn. If the editor actually reads this disgusting material, I'd be surprised.

I don't consider myself a prude or moral bible-basher, but this low-grade sexual banter from some adolescent mind is not what I would expect to read in a games magazine, and it's also not material I'd like my children to read either.

Paul Biggs

of videogames and of the trends in the industry. You've been on the pulse since I've been reading you, and that's for the past nine years. Even if I didn't love games, I'd still pick up *PC ZONE* to top up with cynical belly laughs and crude innuendo. Keep it up chaps!

Jim Bessey

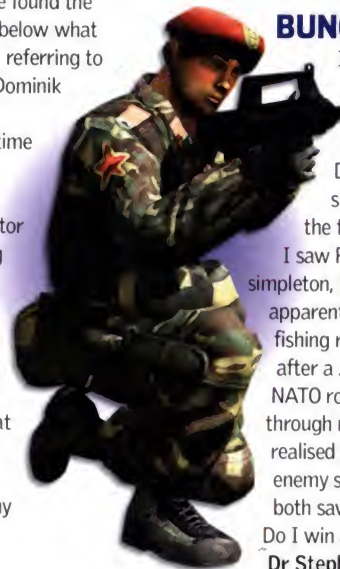
What did someone say about not being able to please all the people all of the time? We want to bring you a games magazine every month that engages, informs and entertains, makes you laugh and provokes debate. I love the fact we can receive letters like these with opinions from completely different ends of the spectrum – long may it continue. In the meantime, you'll find nob gags on pages 34, 56, 78 and 122.

BUNGLE BONCE

I was playing *Battlefield 2* the other day, on the map Kubra Dam. Imagine my surprise when, on the top of the dam,

I saw Rainbow's ursine simpleton, Bungle the Bear, apparently holding a fishing rod. It was only after a .50 high velocity NATO round had passed through my cranium that I realised he was in fact an enemy sniper. Luckily, we both saw the funny side. Do I win a fiver?

Dr Stephen Murray



I would really stop prescribing those drugs to yourself, Steve.

SUBS STANDARD

Why is it that more companies can't take the same stance with regards to these monthly subscriptions to play a game that you've already purchased from a store? I know they have server and other costs,

Letter of the Month

The grateful undead

I've been buying *PC ZONE* since issue 50 and have recently noticed you printing photos of people in strange places holding your distinguished mag. Well, here's a photo of me, the actors and crew filming the new zombie film called *The Zombie Diaries*. Keep up the good work and stop putting Steve Hill's face on naked bits and things – it's affecting the morale of the country.

BoBo_Jones



If you're a regular *PC ZONE* reader, you'll know of our particular affection for the shambling undead. Have a new graphics card, BoBo, which we hope will distract you from eating human brains – at least for a day or two...

WIN!



ONE OF THESE!

You need a good graphics card. We need letters. (Good ones, mind, not rubbish ones like 'PC ZONE rulez, can I have a graphics card please?')

Well, serendipity now! The two needs have collided, right here, right now. Write us a letter today. If it wins Letter of the Month, we'll send you a prize tomorrow. Hurrah!

@ letters@pczone.co.uk

✉ letters, pc zone, future publishing, 99 baker st, london, w1u 6fp

SAY WHAT?

This low-grade sexual banter from an adolescent mind is not what I expect to read in a games mag



but if NCsoft can do it with *Guild Wars*, surely their competitors could come up with something that suits everyone?

I have three kids, so at times can't afford to be paying a monthly sub for a game I really want to play (*World Of Warcraft*, for example). Without the monthly subs, they'd get more people buying and playing the game. Rant over! Iain Metcalf

Simple really Iain – subscriptions make a shit-load of cash for companies. *World Of Warcraft* alone has over four million paying punters. However, as you say, the *Guild Wars* 'experiment' of non-subscription has been a great success, so hopefully other companies will follow NCsoft's lead. Games companies, though, will always follow the cash – four million Horde and Alliance can't be wrong...

GIRL TROUBLE

For almost as long as the humble computer game has existed, there has been a movement among many of us gaming blokes to introduce our long-suffering girlfriends and wives to our hobby. It is a noble thing to do – but did

you ever stop to think of the possible consequences? In an effort to appease my better half's growing complaints about me spending too much time with "that damn thing", I sat her down in front of *World Of Warcraft*.

At first, I revelled in the fact that she loved the game. The complaints about the amount of time I spent on my computer disappeared entirely. Over time, these little sessions of hers imperceptibly started to become longer and longer. To cut a long story short, I'm now effectively banished from my own PC, and am currently in the process of building a new one. PC gaming's a bloody expensive hobby, so think long and hard before you try and convince your significant other to join in the fun and games.

Dave Buckland

May that be a lesson to you Dave. Remember – a selfish gamer is a happy gamer.

FACE OFF

OK, so I've pretty much gotten used to seeing Steve Hill's mug in any game featuring a lady with breasts, but now it

seems you all want a piece of the action. First up, we have Will co-starring in *Rag Doll Kung Fu*, and then there's Prezzaer doing a pantomime turn in *X3: Reunion*, and apparently you now all feature in Lionhead's *Black & White 2* and *The Movies*. So 'fess up *ZONE* – is this the next stage in your masterplan for world domination? Or have you all just gone luvvie on us?

Dan

Damn! You've spotted our long-held wish to become world-famous thespns. Of course, dear



Danny, I have already trodden the boards in the marvellous TV drama *Emmerdale* (Solicitor Ryan, Episode No. 1.2283), but am currently 'resting'. Ahem.

FILM BUFF

I was delighted last month, when, skimming through my new copy of *ZONE*,

Morrowind taught me that I'm far too old with far too many responsibilities to be purchasing games that will have me sitting in my pants for 48 hours at a stretch.

-PlumpOrgan

What do we think of spiders as 'baddies' in games? I think they always look shit. They're the lowest form of enemy.

-madameye

Random funny: BREASTplate. -SuPerNoVi

The *Doom* movie's got the Rock in! It's gonna be awesome in its crapness. Like the Arnie films of yore. -Daemon83

I think that because the *Doom* movie has such a close connection to the game, it'll only give Jack Thompson more ammo to proclaim all gamers are mass-satanists who're planning to conjure up hell demons to rape our youth while they sleep...

-Heero Yuy

Join in the forum fun at www.pczone.co.uk.

MY IRON JUNG

For three years *ZONE* staff members have worked to craft renowned creator of Analytical Psychology, Dr Carl Jung (1875-1961), out of metal. A fount of knowledge, fed with gaming data from past and present, he exists for your enlightenment...



Send your gaming questions and queries to drjung@pczone.co.uk

DEAR DR JUNG,

Q What happens with war games in Germany? Surely it's a bit rich shooting soldiers who could be your own grandfather?
Jon Hobson

A Swastikas are removed from all war shooters, such as *Call Of Duty 2*, for the German release. *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*, meanwhile, removed said symbol and replaced it with a logo that merged the *Quake III* tag, an Eagle and the letter W. Every reference to the Third Reich was removed, suggesting instead that the player was fighting against a secret organisation known as the 'Wolves'. Let's not forget the *Carmageddon* farrago of robots and green-blooded zombies back in 1997 either.

DEAR DR JUNG,

Q Mr Iron Jung, where on earth has the obscure revisionist shooter *You Are Empty* gotten to?
Daniel Cudmore

A *You Are Empty* has fallen off the map somewhat. Last seen at E3 2005 with its Stalinist giant chickens and general soviet grime, it was an intriguing prospect with a far-off Russian release date of Q3 2006. Now, however, it's gone into hiding and developer Digital Spray cannot be hailed on any frequency. Dead or hibernating? I'd swing for the latter. I'll shove my metal fingers a bit further into my contact list for next month and get some answers.

LETTERS



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I found not just one, but two *Donnie Darko* references! The caption on page 21 underneath the picture of the giant pink rabbit was genius, and the comparison of an in-game feature during *The Movies* preview to 'sparkly streams' instantly brought some great images to mind.

Being the most criminally underrated film of all time, it's great to see the *ZONE* team are fans of this cult classic. All I need next month are some Monty Python quotes and I'll be sorted.

Tim Webb

Er... OK. "Spam, spam, spam!", "Ni!", "This parrot is no more!", "Loadsamoney!", "I want that one!" etc, etc.

FAR CRYING

Just finished *Far Cry* – on realistic! What a shit ending. If the sequel has more of that crap at the end there, count me out. Note to developers (Valve included, Bungie excluded): finish games properly! I hate it when people don't take the time to fin...

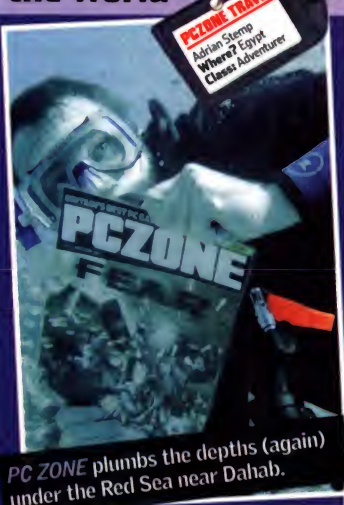
Ambs

I agree – there's nothing more annoying than investing time and effort into playing a game and it finishing with the equivalent of a swift handshake and a boot up the arse. The reality is that publishers often hurry developers along for release, so the ending of a game is something that's (obviously) left until last. Best ending ever? For me, it has to be *The Secret Of Monkey Island* (the LeChuck battle), but what's yours? Let us know.

IN A FLAP

I'm distraught, dismayed and saddened. After purchasing issue 161 of your fine publication, I opened it to find that it just kept opening. Why did you have to put on those silly flaps? I admit the screenshots of *F.E.A.R.* were quite bitchin', as the kids would say, but it makes handling the magazine awkward.

PCZONE Around the World



We want photos of you with *PCZONE* in the most exotic or inappropriate locations. Candid celeb shots count double. Every one printed wins a prize!

In issue 106, a reader complained about such flaps and one Dave Woods promised, and I quote: "Don't worry. You've seen the last of our flaps." In these days of politicians and spin-doctors, I considered your magazine to be one of the last bastions of truth and decency left. I'm not angry, just disappointed.

David

As Mr Woods is no longer editor, I will categorically say now that it's all his fault. The man is a liar and a



scoundrel. Don't worry David, you've seen the last of our flaps...

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

October saw me getting a year older, and as I settled down to install my new birthday present, I started reminiscing (as you do on birthdays). You see, by the age of 20 I'd become a world-saving research scientist at the Black Mesa Research Facility (*Half-Life*). By 21, I was zipping around space, saving the universe from a Shivan invasion (*Freespace 2*). Getting tired of saving the world, at 24 I became an *Evil Genius*. So what did I do this year? Well, at 25, I became a god. With a cow (*Black & White 2*). How can I top that next year?

Mark Draper

I've just had my birthday too, and am currently a lord of the manor, hosting banquets while exploiting the peasants around me (*Stronghold 2*). Or is that my real life? Anyway, by the age of 26, you could be a cigar-chomping misanthrope saving the universe in *Duke Nukem Forever*, although that might be the next birthday. Or the next. Or the next...

IDIOT'S CORNER

Real calls from real idiots...

PCZONE

Hello, *PC ZONE*?

IDIOT

Hi, Dave Woods?

PCZONE

No, he doesn't work here any more.

IDIOT

Oh. I work for a PR company promoting PlayStation 2 add-ons.

PCZONE

Er... This is *PC ZONE*?

IDIOT

You're not interested in PS2 stuff?

PCZONE

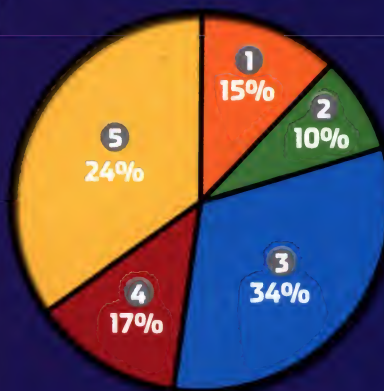
Nope sorry. Try one of the console mags.

IDIOT

Oh, good idea. Cheers! (Hangs up.)

The Big Question

What challenges await Sam Fisher in the fourth instalment of the *Splinter Cell* series?



1 Enemy installations entirely built from bubble wrap: 15%.

2 '80s designer-stubble no longer back in fashion: 10%.

3 Evil terrorists hiding out in a giant light-bulb factory: 34%.

4 World actually quite a peaceful, terror-free place at the minute: 17%.

5 Bad knees: 24%.

ONE WARRIOR.

TWO SOULS.

PRINCE of PERSIA

THE TWO THRONES™

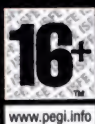
CRAFT YOUR OWN COMBAT STYLE
USING SPEED KILLS AND THE EXPANDED
FREE-FORM FIGHTING SYSTEM.

SEIZE THE REINS OF A CHARIOT AND BATTLE
THROUGH THE CITY OF BABYLON.

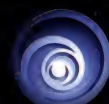
UNLEASH THE DEADLY DAGGERTAIL
AS THE DARK PRINCE.

COMING DECEMBER 2005

◆ www.princeofpersiagame.com



PlayStation 2



UBISOFT

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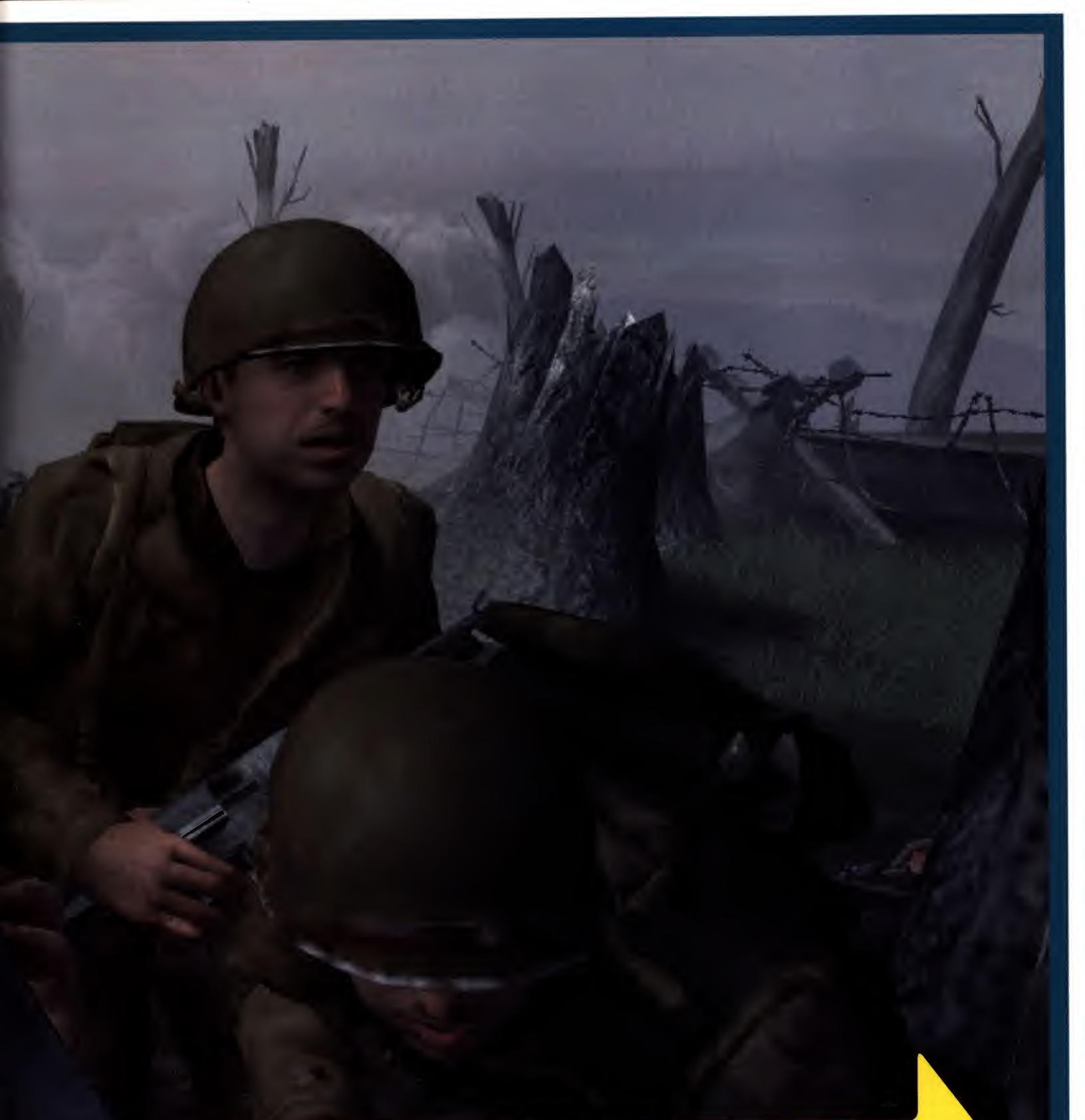
The background image is a dark, atmospheric scene from the game Call of Duty 2. It depicts a soldier in a trench, viewed from a first-person perspective. The soldier is wearing a helmet and holding a rifle. In the distance, there are several dead, skeletal trees and a small structure on a hill. Two bright yellow lights are visible on the hill. The overall tone is somber and war-torn.

COVER STORY CALL OF DUTY 2

COVER STORY

CALL OF DUTY 2

We know the guns, we know the beaches, we know the guts and we know the glory. But do we still want more?



We've now been to the 1940s more often than gormless time-travelling philanderer Nicholas Lyndhurst in the rubbish *Goodnight Sweetheart*. But familiarity hasn't bred contempt. This is the sequel to the most finely sculpted war shooter of all time. This, we thought, could be something really quite beautiful. But is it? Turn to the page this quasi-magical yellow arrow is pointing at (copied straight from the way they do it in *Heat* magazine by the way) and you'll know all...

PAGE

48



NEWS EDITOR Will Porter

Revelations

YOU KNOW WHEN you do something that you enjoy so ridiculously much that you suddenly realise you're not getting so much out of it? That happened to me at the start of this issue. I suddenly realised that I wasn't getting as much out of games as I used to: I got massive writer's block, snapped at my co-workers and turned into some sort of hideous shit. I had been creatively castrated, and I wasn't happy.

But then! Forget your road to Damascus and forget your bath-time Eureka! – I got my power back! I was in the top bit of The Bedford pub in Balham, it was past midnight and I had just queued for going on half-an-hour in Turkish Bath-conditions for a drink. I was parched, angry and still game-hating at that point – so I settled for two pints of strong cider for me and a J20 for my ladyfriend. Barely 20 minutes later, I was suddenly bathed in a cold blue light and the hustle of the pub seemed to slow down around me. My expression turned from drunken vacancy to enlightenment. Lightning had struck.

"You don't understand! Games are the future! In ten years time, well twenny maybe, we'll look at games from our times like we do Rembran! We will darlin! S'true! And I'm so lucky to be doin' what I do." "Are you drinking both those ciders Will?" "So lucky. An' they're like Rembran! They're amazin! Art!" "You're starting to embarrass me." "Rembran! sweetheart!"

This is the true story of the reinvigoration of my career in the games industry. And it's all down to Blackthorn. Visits to Blizzard, *Call Of Duty 2* and an intravenous drip of *Civ IV* helped in the following weeks. Paracetamol helped the next day.

PCZONE

UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the world of PC gaming

FISHER'S A GOOD BOY REALLY...

***Splinter Cell 4* reveals more stubble, more darkness, more time in prison**

www.bewaresamfisher.com



HAVING SAVED THE world on more than one occasion, you'd think that Sam Fisher would be some sort of national hero – but no, he's doing time. "A few months after his daughter's death, Sam's been caught and charged with armed robbery and murder, and sentenced to 20 years in jail," explains *Splinter Cell* scribe John McLean-Foreman. "He's been incarcerated at Ellsworth's federal penitentiary in Kansas."

Bear witness then, to a sudden shift of gears for the *Splinter Cell* series – a bit like where Bond goes rogue in *Licence To Kill*, or that episode of *24* where Jack Bauer quits his job at CTU so he can go break some guy's legs and get the answers he needs. *Splinter Cell 4* opens with a jail-break and a heavily-



SAM Fisher: now with extra stubble.

tattooed Sam escaping prison with an apparently small-time crook called Jamie Washington – who turns out to be connected with an operation in New Orleans called John Brown's Army, who in turn have links with leading chemical minds.

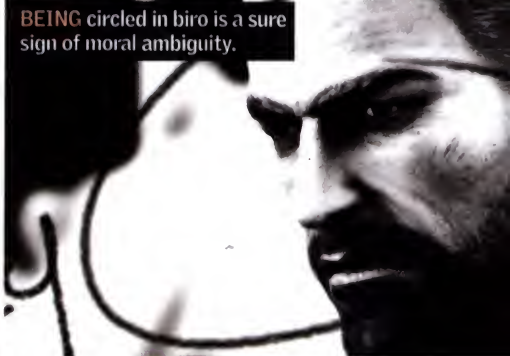
Suspicious? Fishy? Something strange in the neighbourhood? Well yes, that and a delightful back-to-basics feel for the heavily-be-gadged series (we've no doubt that Sam'll get his tri-green goggle things back at some point).

Just take a look at him too: Fisher obviously understands the basics of the stubble-to-evilness ratio, and with that moody stare he's leaving nobody in doubt as to his new moral alignments. But we're sure that behind his hardened exterior beats a heart of gold, just like Jose Mourinho or Dennis the Menace.



EITHER Sarah Fisher lives in the future, or she's prepared for all eventualities.

BEING circled in biro is a sure sign of moral ambiguity.



STOP PRESS!

Stubbs The Zombie

Wideload's brain-nibbling extravaganza, with Stubbs the undead 1950s door-to-door salesman, has been slated for UK release in February. Hands-on next month.

Helming Halo

We revealed that Peter Jackson was a *Halo* maniac a few issues back, so no surprises that he's executive producer on a could-be-alright *Halo* movie.

Age of Empires IV and V

Artwork from the Collector's Edition of *AOE III* features a pic of a Vietnam soldier under the numeral IV, and a space-age sort under a V. The future of *AOE*?

20

Neverwinter Nights 2

The sequel's almost here and it still isn't winter. It's like the anti-Narnia.



30

Titan Quest

Diablo-style adventuring in a Homeric world. Ancient Homer, not Simpson Homer.



42

World Of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade

Meet the Blood Elves. Well, there goes the neighbourhood...



Still Hungry?

www.planethalf-life.com/manke/bwg/game.htm

Venerable Half-Life mod *They Hunger* gets a sexy '60s Source makeover

ZOMBIES, ALWAYS POPULAR in this neck of the woods, are about to get a new brain-hunting diversion in a commercial release of *They Hunger: Lost Souls* – presumed, although not confirmed, to be being considered for release over Steam.

For the ill-educated and too-young, *They Hunger* was an excellent three-part single-player mod for *Half-Life* that first appeared when we were partying like it was 1999. At least as good as the vast majority of commercial zombies around, and vastly preferable to a sharp kick in the nuts, its tale of a struggling writer, an undead sheriff and hordes of the shambling undead enchanted millions. Now it's back!



For the title, Black Widow games, also responsible for the *Underworld* movie's promo mod, is making a gory visit to the swinging Eastern Europe of the '60s. You play a hapless tourist who finds shelter in a forbidding-looking monastery during an outbreak of zombie-itis, with hilarious consequences.



SHAMBLING undead automatons? Count us in!

Public Service Announcement

Date for your diary...

www.psychonauts.com

NATIONAL PSYCHONAUTS-PURCHASE

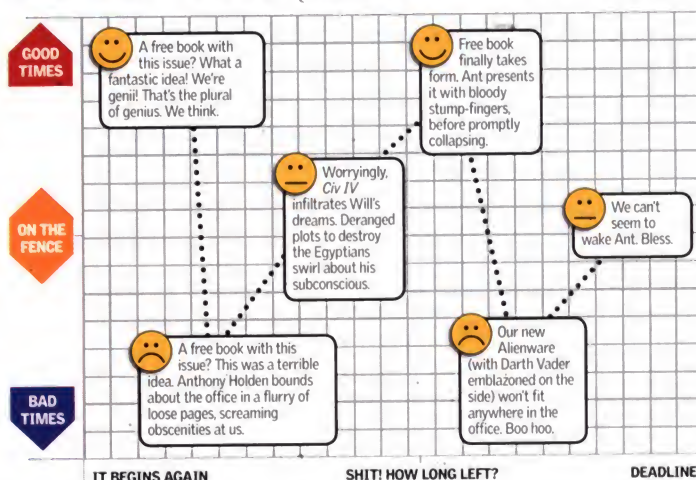
day is almost upon us, so this is just a friendly reminder that from November 25, ALL PC ZONE readers will be expected to have AT LEAST ONE copy of the game. With an RRP of £29.99, it will be available from both High Street computer game stockists and online retailers. PC ZONE will be making random spot-checks on the homes, workplaces and domiciles of friends and family of all ZONE readers – punishment for non-compliance will be swift and brutal. This is all. God bless our glorious leader Tim Schafer. May his empire last a thousand years...



STUFF

Activision and id, that terrible twosome, have confirmed the oft-touted next-gen *Castle Wolfenstein* is on its way. With single-player being formed in the halls of Raven, and multiplayer thought to be in the hands of Nerve's *Resurrection of Evil* Software, details are thin on the ground. It is, however, safe to assume that 'them Nazi types' will feature heavily. And maybe some zombies too.

LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER



THE ART OF NOISE

A knife, a watermelon, a microphone and something called Foley. Bingo! One PC game stabbing...



Reporter
Pavel Barter



Is there anything you want Pavel Barter to investigate? (Warning: some jobs might be considered too big or too small...)

@ letters@pczone.co.uk

✉ pavel barter, pc zone,
99 baker st, london, wlu 6fp

FOLEY? YOU MEAN the Wrestling guy?" Your correspondent's lack of knowledge on the subject was more than apparent. My commissioning editor frowned and prodded me with a pointy stick. "No, fool. Foley sound recording for games. Y'know, when special women tap coconuts together and record it to imitate the sound of horses trotting. Now get to work!" A quest for 'special women' sounded ace. Even better was the discovery of an audio technique that has wormed its way into games like *F.E.A.R.* and *Star Wars: Republic Commando* while remaining as mysterious as a tramp up a tree. So Foley, what the hell are you?

Earcom's Paul Weir, audio man behind games like *Discworld Noir* and *Constantine*, attempts an explanation: "Foley is the creation of incidental sounds for a complex and realistic audio experience – clothing movements, footsteps and so on. Foley sounds are all about characters and what you can see on screen, rather than ambient effects."

WHO HE?

It's named after Jack Foley, apparently, a sound engineer for Universal Studios who simulated the sound of 10,000 Roman soldiers marching to battle in the movie *Spartacus* by jingling a few keyrings together. Spat from the greasy loins of Hollywood, it's now a technique on heavy rotation in gaming – an example of which is readily provided by Remedy Entertainment's Peter Hajba.

"The reloading sounds of the M79 grenade launcher in the first *Max Payne* were made using a metal tube from a vacuum cleaner which was tapped with hands' and scraped with car keys." For the sounds of Payne's pistol clips dropping onto the floor, meanwhile: "An old metal and plastic toy car made some pretty nice sounds when tossed around."

SOUNDBLASTER 32

Mind you, such aural trickery has taken some time to catch on in games. For years, the PC's sound fidelity was more than limited, mainly because of low sample rates and bulimic RAM that couldn't hold down enough audio files.

The result? Atmospheric bleeps and bleeps, but attempts at Foley that were buried beneath an avalanche of audible crap. As sound fidelity improved, so developers behind games like *Call Of Duty* began cavorting around shooting ranges, exploding cow carcasses with vintage weapons and recording clip ejects and reloads. Ubisoft even got some real MG42s and pointed a few mics at them for *Splinter Cell*.

But this isn't simply a 'my weapon's louder than yours' competition. Using Foley techniques, a door lock becomes a cocked trigger, unspooled audiotape is jungle foliage and compressed air from an air canister emulates a nasty explosion. LucasArts should know – it's been innovating game audio since *Ballblazer* on the Commodore 128.

"Well, for *Star Wars Battlefront* we went

hogwild creating tons of audio assets," explains David Collins, LucasArts' lead sound designer. "We had Foley for every move, particularly on the PC because the shackles are removed in terms of memory constraints and you can load a lot of sound for plenty of detail. In *Battlefront II* there are more characters because the game is bigger, and we've loads more Foley."

Super-posh facilities help. Skywalker Sound, at George Lucas's Skywalker Ranch, features an enclosed sound stage area with 40ft-high walls and dozens of boxes of bric-a-brac filled with sound props, and has hosted the *Star Wars* prequel movie trilogy, as well as LucasArts games. Collins continues: "*Battlefront II* is all about troop combat and our Foley artist at Skywalker had just finished *Star Wars: Episode III* the movie, so she was very familiar with the sound of stormtroopers. She used a combination of props, belts and American Football pads to create the acrylic squeaks of their uniforms."

LucasArts' Foley boffins work in the dark so they can study screen animations of characters' movements, says Collins. Another reason for turning the lights off is so the sound designer, in a studio overlooking the stage, isn't distracted by the madcap antics below. During the making of *Republic Commando* that's exactly what happened.

"They were creating a wet, heavy sound for a



EARCOM'S
Paul Weir
'does' Foley.





LUCASARTS' lead sound designer David Collins takes to the decks.



LIGHTS, camera, microphone, chopped pineapple!



FLASH gel does the hard work, so you don't have to.

big Trandosian lizard creature and I decided to go down to the Foley Pit – it looked as though they'd just had a picnic. There was a grocery store bag, a cutting board with a knife and all this fruit that had been split open. The artist had sliced a pineapple and walked the two halves across a surface to make slappy, lizards footsteps!"

STRANGE CAREERS

Foley effects make the weirdest games seem practically pedestrian, says Tim Larkin (*Myst V*, *Pariah*, *Uru: Ages Beyond Myst*), who's been dabbling in game Foley for over a decade. "When you're performing the Foley, they almost all seem strange," he laughs. "I've been in my basement throwing bones around, sliding big orange traffic cones and scratching glass panes with twigs."

Paul Weir, meanwhile, struggled with a neck-snapping sound for Activision's upcoming *Crime Life: Gang Wars*, and in the end just snapped some cream-crackers in front of a microphone. "Rotten fruit, like melons, is great for stabbing people or crushing their heads. I've also spent loads of time squelching around in mud, which is great for horror sounds..."

Just thinking about the amount of work that goes into creating a full Foley

experience is enough to make you exhausted. Choose a clonetrooper in *Battlefield II* and the game accesses a sound bank where these soldiers run, walk and crawl on surfaces like concrete, water, sand, dirt – each with varying effects and degrees of pitch and volume. "You can create these sounds on the PC because of its amount of memory," says David Collins, "but it means huge expense and many hours in the studio."

Sadly, game audio has not kept up to speed with other innovations like physics. For a recent example, where were the infinite variations of sound accompanying the Newtonian trickery in *Half-Life 2*?

"It's true," admits Foley prophet Collins. "We're still using samples, waves and looping in games. Drop a weapon on the floor and generally we'll record Foley of it bouncing, but it's not truly in sync and we haven't been able to nail the object bouncing and all its different micro sounds. There has been a lot of pioneering in game audio, but there's still a lot more to come."

Synthetic sounds and repetitive audio are still here, but Tim Larkin concludes: "I'm used to hearing movements and subtlety in films – I don't want that left out of games." Foley artists, tapping coconut shells together in a dark recording studio, may have seriously peculiar jobs, but it's their ear candy that makes PC games an altogether tastier prospect. Now, where's that watermelon... **PCZ**

My little Foley

Mental game sound effects to try at home



1 CAT LITTER

Action: remove the cat, and preferably the poop, then walk on it.
Effect: ooh, it sounds all sandy. You could be in the Sahara. Or Bognor Regis.

2 PHONE BOOKS

Action: drop the *Yellow Pages* from a height.
Effect: a painful uppercut to the jaw.

3 GLASS

Action: scrape glass against glass.
Effect: creepy horror sound.

4 BAKING SHEETS

Action: bang two of 'em together.
Effect: thunder bolt and lightning, very, very frightening.

5 CELERY

Action: snap that green monstrosity in two.
Effect: bones breaking. Ouch!



Dear Prez,

That *Myst* series that you insist on babbling on about is nothing but a collection of inane and boring puzzles linked by mindless waffle, written and performed by drama school rejects. The people I know who enjoy them, present company excepted, are all 50 and almost dead. Will

Dear Will,

There's a fine line between dull as shite and sedate pacing in an atmospherically complex world. *Myst* straddles the line with aplomb. The problem most people have with the *Myst* series, you see, is that most people are morons. Prez

Dear Prez,

Then why is it that every *Myst* puzzle either involves a metal plaque with strange etchings, or an other-worldly contraption of some sort that may or may not have been built by a race more advanced than our own? Whatever the circumstance, the plaque and contraption will ALWAYS have been built solely to open locked doors. It's nothing more than a one-trick pony drowned in its own smug mysticism. WP

Dear Will,

Not true! There was at least one puzzle in the latest *Myst* that didn't involve a door at all. Mostly. Anyway, what is life if not a succession of ever more complex doors? *Myst* is both a relaxing diversion from the never-ending stream of ballistic simulations that have swamped our society, and a chance of salvation for our idiot youth that enjoy Funboy Slim (or whatever his name is) and downloading ringtones. When did it become a crime to stretch the brain matter with something other than a bullet penetration? Did I miss a meeting? PP

Dear Prez,

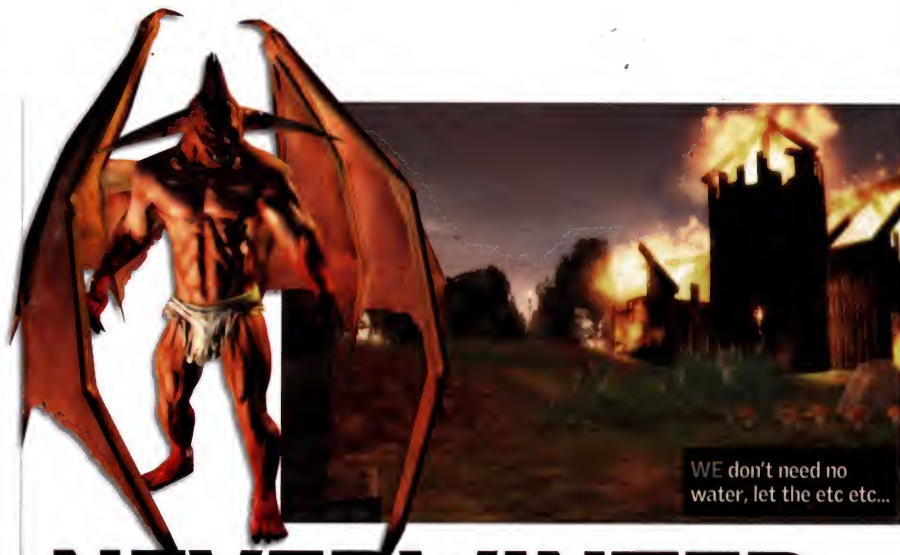
Listen grandad, the day that anyone under 30 ever buys a *Myst* title is the day that civilization crumbles down around our ears. WP

Dear Will,

The fact you spelt 'civiliSation' with a 'z' shows how uneducated our society has become. The sooner it crumbles around our ears, the sooner we can commence rebuilding a better one. One where intelligence is lauded instead of mocked. Leave me now, I tire easily and sleep is ever harder to come by. PP

Dear Prez,

First off, 'civilization' is spelt with a 'z', Sid Meier told me. Second off, your continued flattery of the *Myst* series makes you look like a prize buffoon. Third off, *Myst* is rubbish. WP



NEVERWINTER NIGHT-FEVER

Remember the Forgotten Realms?

www.atari.com/nwn2 | ETA: 2006

THE ASCENT OF the cult of *Neverwinter Nights* was dazzling – straddling the domain of the hardened role-player and that of the RPG-curious with a spectacular display of undead-slashing and user-friendliness. Even 'real people' were converted into pitiful dice-rolling warriors and wizards – making it somewhat of a gateway drug for *World Of Warcraft*. And so bid welcome to *Neverwinter Nights 2* (unfortunately not called *Neverwinter Noons*, *Neverwinter Dusks* or any other interesting time of day).

As usual in such sequel affairs, it does indeed look better than ever. Being developed by Obsidian (who also developed *KOTOR2*, BioWare's other unwanted baby) and using an entirely rebuilt graphics engine, the game not only looks fantastic, but sticks faithfully to the type of gameplay that made the original as popular as it was. *NWN2* takes some obvious cues from *KOTOR2*, such as the inclusion of a third-person camera (making this far more appealing to newcomers), the way you influence your companions and even simple things like how the camera will show the NPC you're talking to, along with the familiar-looking list of dialogue options underneath. You'll also be able to take control of your companions directly, and,

DRAGONS:
always moody.



FANTASY pigs, known by the bearded as 'hogs'.



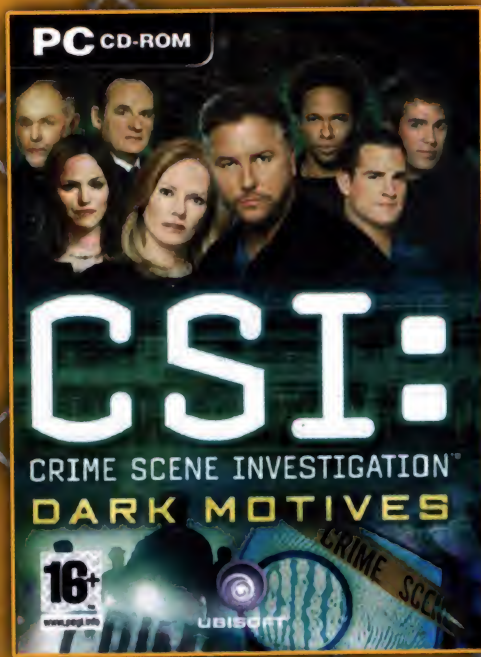
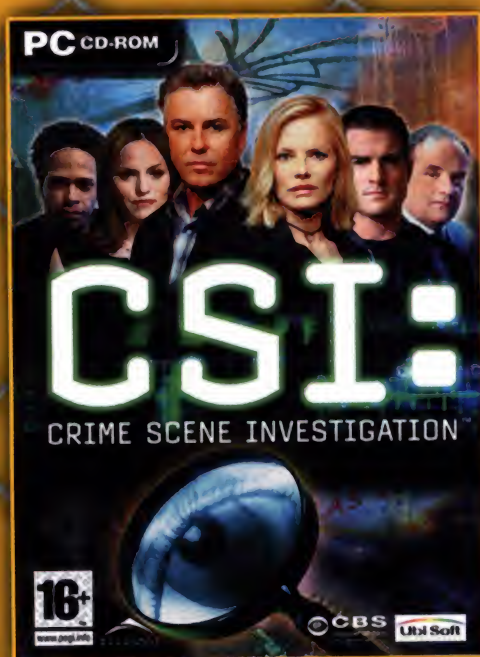
depending on your interactions with them, new quests and story arcs can open up.

Another major addition is the ability to build your own strongholds, and, as you gain renown, employ (more than one!) henchman to toil away in your self-constructed den, researching spells and the like for you. As with the original, creating additional content will be encouraged through the massive range of tools provided, and with the sequel being fully backwards-compatible with fan-made content for the first game, there's already a wealth of custom-content out there in Internet land.

Obsidian has already proven itself worthy of filling BioWare's shoes with *KOTOR2* – iffy ending aside – no doubt it can do the same with *Nights*.

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UBISOFT

**HOT
SHOTS**

HELLGATE: LONDON

DEVELOPER Flagship Studios **PUBLISHER** Namco
WEBSITE www.hellgatelondon.com **ETA** 2006

THERE'S PANIC ON the streets of London. So there's probably panic on the streets of Birmingham. So we wonder to ourselves, could life ever be sane again? Well, seeing as demons have flooded into the London of the future, humanity has been crushed and a brave few first-person action-roleplayers are all that's left to fight back – probably not. With its randomly generated game structure, Anglophile tinge and vast collection of items and weapons to scavenge, tweak and perfect, the fruits of Flagship's ex-*Diablo* workers' labours could taste very sweet indeed.

**7**

The Bigger Picture

1 HOME SWEET HOME

Red phone boxes? Cycle lanes? Litter problems? Residents picking fights with those from distant lands? Yep, it's London alright. Can't wait till *Hellgate: Bolton*.

2 SIGNAL FAILURE CAUSES DELAYS

Humanity has been forced underground by the opening of the HellGate – Lex Luthor's secret hide-out is just up this passage and to the right.

3 HEAVILY ARMoured TEMPTRESS

Gigantic Templar cleavages seem to be the norm in the future – which is one thing to look forward to despite everything else. Armour manufacture is trickier, however.

4 LOBSTER BULL

A demonic version of the Mole in *Thunderbirds*, the Carnagor is a subterranean ball of demonic claws and muscle that digs its way through the bedrock of London. We prefer dogs.

5 HULK ANGRY

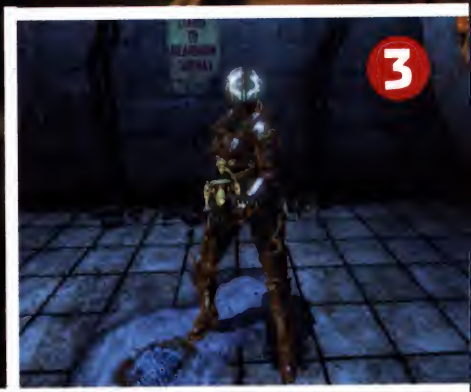
The glowing ball-sack on this chap's chin is swimming with poisons, toxins and grim green stuff, making the Fetid Hulk one to avoid should he get over-excited.

6 FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE

This flame-spitter is known as the Firefly weapon, partly in homage to the talents of *Serenity* writer (and thereby murderer) Joss Whedon. It spills liquid-fire on its foes, with hilarious consequences.

7 BY THE POWER OF BLACKFRIARS

It isn't all laser guns and explosions in the future: should you so wish, you can tool yourself up with a heavily-serrated sword and hack some demon. *Diablo* isn't that far away after all.



THE
MAN
WHO
KNOWS

Star of this column and bastion of moral authority, some-time lawyer **Jack Thompson** has outlined a violent videogame in which you must brutally murder a 'Paula' Eibel, the CEO of 'Take This Interactive Software' – a **thinly veiled** reference to Paul Eibel, the head of Take 2, prolific producer of the **notorious GTA series**. In Thompson's game, the player would then find himself "urinating onto the severed brain stems of the Eibel family victims". This apparent, and **rubbish**, stab at satire was run with a promise that if the idea was turned into a game, then Thompson would donate a **staggering \$10,000** to Eibel's charity of choice.

Popular Web-comic artist and **avid gamer Mike Krahulik** of Penny-Arcade contacted Thompson, pointing out that gamers have donated over half-a-million US dollars to the **Child's Play** charity. Thompson, a lawyer of **28** years, called Krahulik directly: "Jack just called and screamed at me for a couple of minutes. He said if I email him again I will 'regret it'. **What a violent man.**" In response, Penny-Arcade donated the \$10,000 promised by Thompson to The Entertainment Software Association Foundation: "We've just made the donation you never would, and never meant to. Ten thousand dollars' worth. And we made it in your name."

In more Thompson news, **Sensible (ish)** man **David Walsh**, founder of the **National Institute On Media And The Family**, was quick to distance himself from the well-liked chap (ahem). "Over the past few months, your use of our name, **without our permission**, has had a negative influence as we try to educate the public. Some of the people you criticise are not only people of **integrity**, but are people who have worked to improve the lives of children," **spat Walsh**, angrily.

Thompson responded: "People like me have to get into the trenches and **stop the Nazis**", before spouting his trademark rhetorical **legal threats** and accusing Walsh of **taking bribes**. Meanwhile, vigilant **GTA** modders released **Defamation Of Character: A Jack Thompson Murder Simulator**. Thompson denied his charitable obligations, instead claiming: "God is in this battle, and I'm **privileged** to be a **foot soldier**. You all should be concerned, not about me, but about **Him**." God has **yet to comment**.

"Jack [Thompson] just called and screamed at me for a couple of minutes. He said if I email him again I will 'regret it'. What a violent man"

PERSIAN
GULF?


British Museum speaks out on veracity of *Prince Of Persia: The Two Thrones*. Sand zombies doubtful...

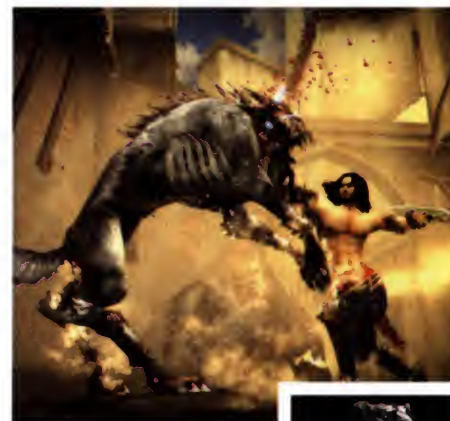
THE WORLD OF Middle-Eastern antiquities is in uproar. Or at least it could have been had **ZONE** not stepped in to calm things down. The debate in hand is as follows: how Persian is *Prince Of Persia 3*? We contacted Nigel Tallis, curator of 'The Forgotten Empire: The World Of Ancient Persia' exhibition at the British Museum, to nip any worries in the bud...

THE PRINCE

ZONE: The Prince of Persia is a schizophrenic badass who can control time.

Nigel Tallis: The Greek historian and soldier Xenophon gives an account, somewhat imaginary, of the life of Cyrus, the first king of The Persian Empire, that your readers should investigate. Meanwhile, another Greek historian, Herodotus, says that the Persians taught their sons only three things: to ride a horse, use a bow and speak the truth.


Verdict: *The Two Thrones* takes some liberties in its portrayal of a Persian prince. 

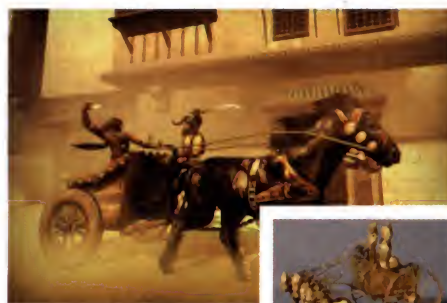


BIG DOGS

ZONE: *The Two Thrones* has some big scary hounds that you have to kill!

Nigel Tallis: Well, we have this polished black limestone statue of a large mastiff from Persepolis on display in the exhibition.


Verdict: Ubisoft has done its Persian canine research. 



CHARIOTS

ZONE: There's an ace bit in the new game with all these chariots going really, *really* fast!


Nigel Tallis: The Achaemenid Persians did invent a new form of armoured war chariot – equipped with fearsome blades and scythes. These were used in small numbers, but the ridden horse had largely replaced military chariotry in this period.

Verdict: There aren't many chariots, and they do have blades, so a point for **POP!** 

ENEMIES

ZONE: We're not sure, but we doubt that Babylon has ever been invaded by a malcontent army of sand-infected automatons.

Nigel Tallis: No – but Babylonian mythology is particularly rich in all forms of weird and composite creatures which people may like to read about.

Verdict: We thought it unlikely. Another good nit-pick from plucky Nigel. 

CONCLUSION:

Draw! Despite taking some obvious liberties with history, *Prince Of Persia* is in some ways a well-documented account of life in Ancient Persia.

THE FORGOTTEN EMPIRE

'The Forgotten Empire: The World Of Ancient Persia' exhibition runs until January 8 at the British Museum in London – nearest Tube Tottenham Court Road. Both Will and his girlfriend heartily recommend it, while Will's girlfriend also adds that the cakes at the museum's coffee shop are nothing short of excellent. Will adds that they are a mite expensive. To book tickets, visit www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk.





HEY! I'M WALKIN' HERE!

The Big Apple that never ever sleeps

www.atari.com/us/games/tycoon_city/pc | ETA: November 2005

NEW YORK, NEW York it's a hell of a town – they say if you put all of its skyscrapers on top of one another, you'd have one really tall, structurally unsound skyscraper. With that in mind, let's introduce *Tycoon City: New York*, the latest game from Deep Red – the guys who brought us *Monopoly Tycoon*, *Beach Life* and *Vega\$: Make It Big*.

Deep Red has taken everything it's learnt from its previous titles, and is looking to produce the most sophisticated *Tycoon* game ever in terms of AI, graphics and scale. With 64,000 individual inhabitants and a fully scaleable 3D camera that allows you to move from a

view of the entire island of Manhattan all the way down to the various Starbucks-slurping, Noo Yawker-infested pavements, it's safe to say that it's got the scale side of things worked out.

Ever ones for investigation, *PC ZONE* cornered Deep Red man Paul Howarth to ask if the game would feature the stereotypes we demanded: grumpy cabbies, coffee pronounced as 'cworfee', Donald Trump, nice breakfasts, Central Perk and scary tramps. The reply?

"No grumpy cabbies I'm afraid, although there will be plenty of horns honking from yellow cabs. I definitely think there will be a good few 'cworfees' in there. Donald Trump, alas no, although we did talk to his people about getting him in there somehow, along with Trump Tower, but it never came to pass.

"Yep, plenty of New York breakfasts. Central Perk; no, not unless we want to get our arses royally sued! I don't think there are any tramps in there, but who knows what one of our coders might have slipped in." Start spreadin' the news.



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Default Mode



FPS Mode



RTS Mode



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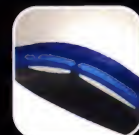
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**COMING
SOON...**

CRASHDAY

Steve Hogarty can't drive, but it doesn't stop him trying, despite court orders

DEVELOPER Moon Byte Studios PUBLISHER Atari WEBSITE www.moonbyte.de PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 161

THE LOWDOWN

Fast cars	✓
Huge explosions	✓
Big, loud guns	✓
Stunts, some of which are 'insane'	✓
Not much variety in the weaponry	✗

ETA
Mar
'06

DESPITE THE SOMEWHAT serious implications of real wrecked cars (we're talking serious injury to adverts for car insurance), the virtual smashing of vehicles has always been fun – a sentiment shared by the creator of *Crashday*, a hi-octane game that believes a car isn't a car until it's hurtling through the air in several thousand pieces.

Amazingly though, the origins of this sleek, adrenalin-fuelled racer came when its creators were proud owners of bumfluff beards – at a tender 13 years of age. "Back in 1997, *Crashday* started as a hobby project of my friend Jan Bodenstein and me," explains project leader Robert Clemens. "Our dream was to create a game that blends the classic stunts and its track editor, with the wrecking action of *Carmageddon*."

In short, we're talking about some serious pubescent passion that went into

developing the title – you can almost smell the inability to talk to pretty girls.

STUNTED GROWTH

"After a few years of development (without any budget) and lots of effort, we ended up with something that was good enough to start considering a commercial release. At that point we were really running out of resources, so in 2003 we joined forces with Hamburg game development studio Replay Studios to finish work on *Crashday*."

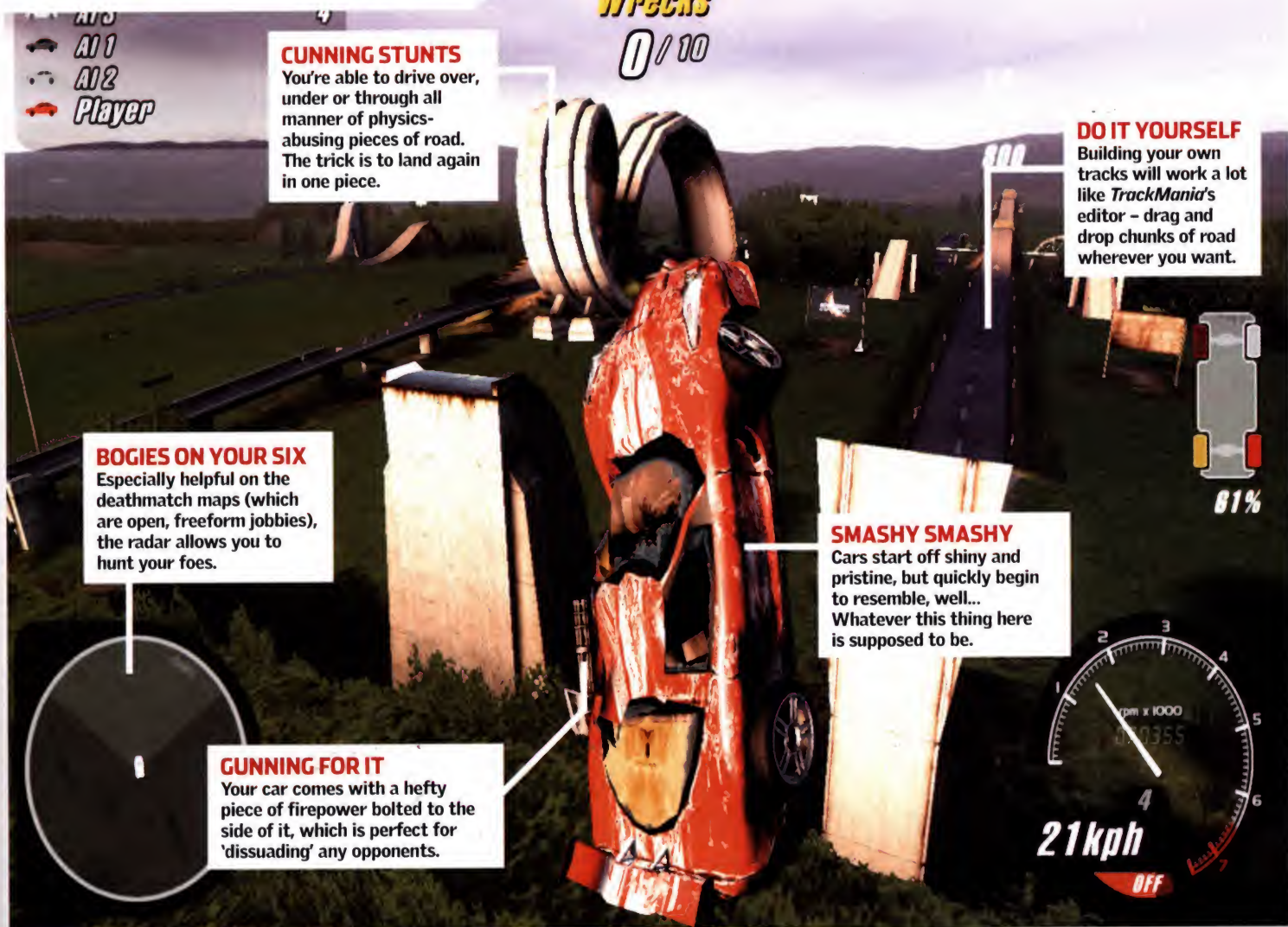
At this point, I think it's only fair we put into words what everybody is thinking: the huge half-pipes; the loop-the-loops; the physically improbable stunts; this is *TrackMania* isn't it?

"Well, both *TrackMania* and *Crashday* focus on easy accessibility and feature a track editor, but that's where similarities end," continues Clemens. "We try to avoid comparing *Crashday* too much to any other racing game since it's rather a

new breed – a crazy mix of racing, speed and destruction that allows you to build your own mad courses. It's a blend of different action racing games: the casual gameplay and destructive fun of *Burnout*; the open terrain and wrecking action of *Carmageddon*; a track editor similar to *TrackMania*; and the game's Stunt mode, which is best compared to *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, only with cars."

Despite the fact that *Crashday* is melding together so many different ideas from so many different games (what with a *UT2004*-on-wheels feel to vehicular deathmatch), it still feels different enough to warrant its own existence. With a huge amount of customisability, *Crashday* will at the very least be a huge pile of something, and our bet is that something won't be putrid faeces. And seeing as it's being made by two men who must have sacrificed no end of school discos to get it to us, that's nothing but a good thing. **PC**

WHY YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED...



Wrecks
0/10

CUNNING STUNTS
You're able to drive over, under or through all manner of physics-abusing pieces of road. The trick is to land again in one piece.

DO IT YOURSELF
Building your own tracks will work a lot like *TrackMania*'s editor - drag and drop chunks of road wherever you want.

BOGIES ON YOUR SIX
Especially helpful on the deathmatch maps (which are open, freeform jobbies), the radar allows you to hunt your foes.

GUNNING FOR IT
Your car comes with a hefty piece of firepower bolted to the side of it, which is perfect for 'dissuading' any opponents.

SMASHY SMASHY
Cars start off shiny and pristine, but quickly begin to resemble, well... Whatever this thing here is supposed to be.

81%

rpm x 1000
21kph
OFF



HUGE explosions and flashy sports cars are a match made in heaven, and *Crashday* has them in abundance.



A car isn't a car until it's hurtling through the air in several thousand pieces



DON'T expect beheadings and gore – this is PG-13 stuff.



TITAN QUEST

A myth and a legend in his own lunchtime, *Sam Kieldsen* was the only man suitable for this particular journey...

DEVELOPER Iron Lore Entertainment PUBLISHER THQ WEBSITE titanquestgame.com

THE LOWDOWN

Diablo-esque action RPG	✓
Set in the ancient world	✓
Eye-popping visuals	✓
Powerful level editor	✓
Aimed at casual gamers	✗

ETA
Q3
'06



THE Fosbury Flop was discovered through ragdoll physics, y'know.

IMAGINE, FOR A moment, the traditional roleplaying game setting. Picture it in your mind. We're guessing that you're probably visualising a quasi-medieval world populated by green-skinned orcs, gold-loving dwarfs, bearded mages and sexually ambiguous elves. There are probably lots of skulls lying around for dramatic effect, and potions with spindly writing on them that have to be quaffed. And possibly enchanted swords. Enchanted swords that are on fire. The world – or should we say 'realm' – is probably called Tiranna or Belmara or Calvados. Are we anywhere close?

It's all getting a bit tired, we think you'll agree. Yes, JRR Tolkien churned out some books that many of us might admit to liking a bit, but the legacy is so widespread it's ludicrous. Consider what's on offer in terms of goblin-ness – *Dungeon Siege II*, *World Of Warcraft*, *Warhammer Online*, *Dungeons & Frigging Dragons Online*. It's all dungeons, hammers and eldritch – and enough to make you want to hunt down and torture the nearest hobbit.

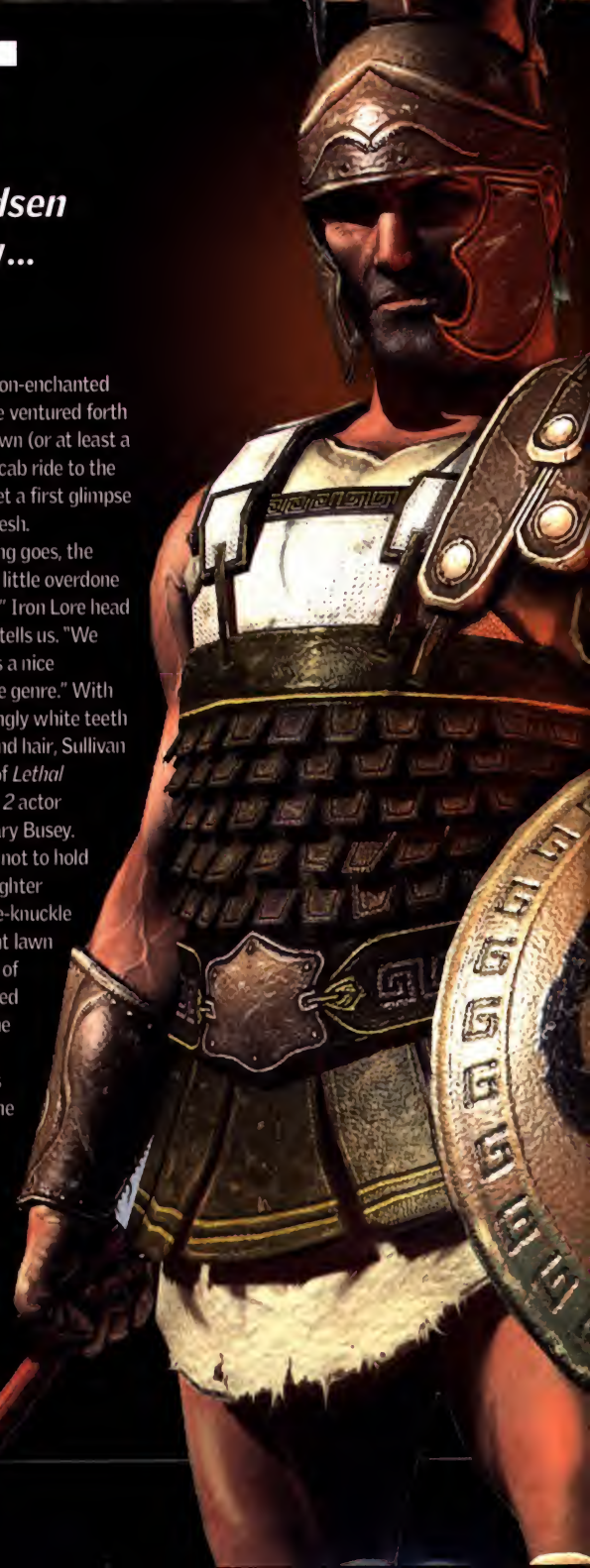
WALK LIKE AN EGYPTIAN


Which is why we were immediately intrigued by Iron Lore's forthcoming debut effort, an action RPG set in the ancient world. Think about it: the rich, evocative settings of Greece, Egypt and Crete. A cast of fickle gods, gargantuan titans, brave/wily heroes and the weird and wonderful monsters we all know from classical myths and legends. This, we thought, sounds more

like it. And so, trusty non-enchanted dictaphone in hand, we ventured forth on an odyssey of our own (or at least a flight to Boston and a cab ride to the Iron Lore studio), to get a first glimpse of *Titan Quest* in the flesh.

"As far as roleplaying goes, the fantasy genre's been a little overdone over the last 20 years," Iron Lore head honcho Brian Sullivan tells us. "We think ancient history is a nice refreshing topic for the genre." With his rosy cheeks, dazzlingly white teeth and tightly coiffed blond hair, Sullivan reminds us strangely of *Lethal Weapon* and *Predator 2* actor (and prize nutcase) Gary Busey. Thankfully, he decides not to hold his hand above a fag lighter before fighting us bare-knuckle on Danny Glover's front lawn before developing one of Hollywood's most famed coke habits. Instead, he opts to run through a demo of the game he's been working on for the past half decade.

Titan Quest is extremely *Diablo*-esque in essence, if not in setting. To distil it down to the basics: you take control of a little pectoral man (or breasted woman), and move around an environment,





DON'T get statues like that at Ascot.

THIS shot made us oddly nostalgic about *Hero Quest*. Sniff.

You'll be nattering with the ancients, finding out which part of mythology you're due to smite

clicking on baddies to hit them or chuck spells in their general direction. Many dead monsters yield random loot and weapons as they breathe their last. You level up and improve your character, then resume the beast-bashing. It's a sub-genre that hasn't had a decent injection of love and tenderness since the days of *Diablo* (*Dungeon Siege* withstanding), and Sullivan, starting up Iron Lore after a rewarding spell at Ensemble Studios, reckons filling this gap is the perfect way to pin his new company's colours to the mast.

LABOUR OF LOVE

Iron Lore has been working on *Titan Quest* since late 2000, and this lengthy production period shows in some almost worrying attention to detail. Sullivan kicks off *ZONE*'s walkthrough of the game by taking the hero around a Creek village buzzing with activity. Beautifully animated jugglers juggle, storytellers

perform in the sunshine, merchants hawk their wares, street urchins dart about and dogs forage for scraps. Everywhere you look you see movement, from the lush backgrounds to the sauntering characters; gently swaying vines hang from walls and fishing boats slowly rock at the quayside.

While women with snakes for hair and lizards with magically restorative necks aren't entirely historically accurate, the architecture in these 'hub' parts of the game certainly is. You'll be standing next to all manner of Ionic, Doric and Corinthian pillars – nattering with the ancients and finding out which part of mythology you're next destined to smite.

"We want to give people a feeling for what it was really like to live in the ancient world," says Sullivan. "So we spent a long time making very detailed, almost photorealistic worlds. We have tons of books of just the flora and fauna of Greece and Egypt."

Not being experts on ancient Eastern Mediterranean vegetation beyond what

an olive looks like, we take his word on the accuracy of the plant life as our hero moves from the safety of the village into a more rural area. "Creating cities is a relatively easy thing to do, if you have great artists," Sullivan continues. "However, the scary part is creating a great-looking outdoor world."

LET'S GO OUTSIDE

Now this we can attest to. Iron Lore appears to have pulled off the great outdoors brilliantly. Rather than the terraced slopes and blocky fences of yore, gorgeous water effects and gently rolling hills are the order of the day.

The insane level of detail remains – aside from the oft-mentioned green stuff there are abandoned carts, campfires and tents – and again, your eye catches little movements everywhere. Birds circle overhead, strands of corn sway to the side as our hero or his foes wander through unharvested fields (having ignored clear signs indicating a nearby



THE visual detail holds up even when you zoom in close.



THEY'RE some very manly columns.



SKELETONS are notoriously proud of their patios.

Playing God

Become Zeus with *Titan Quest's* editor



YOU'LL be making this sort of stuff in no time.

Titan Quest is due to ship with one of the best in-game level editors we've ever laid eyes on. With huge numbers of textures and objects plus an excellent landscaping tool, you'll be imitating Diarmid Gavin in no time.

Lead content designer Tom Potter knocked up a stunning map (camps, river, bridge, mountains) for us in a matter of minutes, and promises that the program will be even simpler to use on release.

The most noteworthy part of the editor is Iron Lore's texture blending system, which enables you to apply textures on top of each other, mixing them in a convincing fashion. Put cobbles on top of grass, for example, and the grass will poke through the gaps, rather than the two textures simply blending uniformly into one another. It might not sound like much, but it'll help fans make some truly professional-looking levels.

public footpath we might add). To complete the picture, Sullivan pauses to unleash some kind of area effect spell, its blue blast sending a convincing ripple through the blades of grass nearby. Nice stuff.

And so to combat, the thing that you'll be spending most of the game's 30-40 hour lifespan engaged in. It seems to be a simple affair, with the requisite hammering of the left mouse-button being used to attack with

whatever weapon or spell you've equipped at a particular time. We saw axes, swords, javelins, bows and shields during the visit, and Iron Lore is quick to point out that the works of Homer don't shy away when it comes to pointy implements of death.

THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS

It's frenetic stuff, with tons of small henchmen (wild boars and half-man, half-goat satyrs) rushing at the hero and being swiftly dispatched, their cartwheeling ragdoll deaths proving a source of amusement to one and all. Enemies are generated in decidedly non-scripted fashion, with tougher brute or mage versions appearing at regular intervals. The exact type of these is predetermined by the clever level designers sitting in

their Boston digs, but the numbers, armaments and skills of them depend on stuff like the player's strength and perhaps even favourite colour. Tougher player, tougher bad guys.

Every so often, something truly hard-as-nails arrives on the scene. During the Greek portion of Sullivan's epic adventure, a huge, hulking cyclops appears, prompting Brian to cast a 'Colossus' spell on his hero. As the name suggests, this makes the character increase in size, and he begins facing off against the one-eyed giant on a more level playing field. After despatching this foe (another crowd-pleasing death - apparently every monster can ragdoll around after they pop their clogs, but the larger ones have pre-animated sequences as well), we move to an Egyptian level, most of which takes place inside the gloom of a tomb.



YOU'LL visit Athens and Memphis (Egypt, not Tennessee).

In the beginning...

Brian Sullivan co-creates the *Age Of Empires* series. Nice work if you can get it.

1997

New Lore

Sullivan departs Ensemble and forms Iron Lore with Paul Chieffo. Makes an RPG.

2000

Howdee pardner...

THQ comes on board as publisher. *Titan Quest* has been totally self-financed up till now.

2004

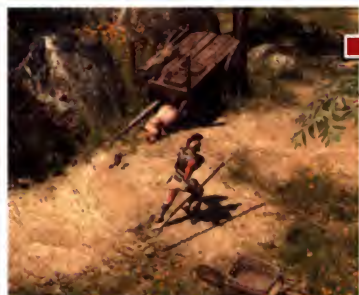
It's come to this

Iron Lore prepares for the lengthy polishing and testing period of *Titan Quest*.

2005

I need a hero

Your step-by-step guide to acting manly in the ancient world



YOU'RE all tooled up, so time to find something to batter. How about this napping pig? Nah, too easy...



NOW sheep, that's a different story. "Prepare to d..." Lord Zeus, there's too many of them! Run! Run away!



YOU could attack these two soldiers from behind, but then again, they're your allies. Not very heroic, is it?



FINALLY, some skeletons. Not much meat on the bones, but at least they're armed and evil! Have at thee!



THE new-look Village People went down a storm.

Titan Quest's lighting effects come to the fore here, as the entire place is bathed in eerie glows. When mummies die and their bandages catch fire, the shadows from the ribcage beneath spread across the floor. Another spell is unleashed, summoning a magma-bodied friend to help the main character out. The way this guy erupts from the ground is yet more eye candy heaped on to an already laden plate.

SHAKE THE ROOM

After Sullivan lays waste to a couple more eye-catching baddie types (spirit-infested statues and a priest sort whose magic allows him to pick up and hurl stone blocks), the demo finishes off with a teasing flourish. We hear a snatch of booming laughter as an enormous statue at the back of the room tears its feet (the only part of it we can see, incidentally) from the floor and begins walking towards the hero. We fade to black.

It's terribly impressive stuff from a visual point of view, but where a game like

Titan Quest lives or dies is with gameplay. Can the straightforward point-and-click combat appeal to hardcore gamers as well as the casual fans that Iron Lore is so keen to ensnare? Sullivan tells us he wants the game to attract *Sims* fans as well as enthusiasts, while one of his cohorts claims that the game will be simple enough "for your mum to play". However, the highly customisable skill and class system Iron Lore showed us seems a little too in-depth for the average post-pub player, let alone a mother who struggles with the concept of a TV remote.

An engaging story could certainly play a big part in this, although Sullivan and co were remaining frustratingly tight-lipped on the matter of plot and background. Although we're fairly certain there are Titans involved somewhere. And probably a spot of questing, too. **PC**

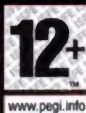


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JEFF!

WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

Jamie Sefton interrogates Epic Games' Jeff Morris about the forthcoming next-gen shooter *UT2007*...

Who are ya?



NAME Jeff Morris

DEVELOPER Epic Games

POSITION Producer

AGE 35

GAMES WORKED ON *Ultima Collection*, *Gettysburg!*, *Alpha Centauri*, *Civilization III*, *Pirates!*, *UT2004*, *UT2007*, *Gears Of War*

FAVOURITE GAMES *Battlefield* series, *X-Com*, *Joint Operations*, *Crush Crumble And Chomp*, *Java Blood Bowl* at fumbll.com

Q How is the new Unreal Warfare multiplayer game type shaping up?

A Even though I've been playing games for over 25 years, I don't care much about jump height, ammo, reload time between shots, stuff like that – but for hardcore deathmatch guys, that's the cutting-edge of the new Assault-meets-Onslaught mode Warfare. As for influences, we love *Battlefield*, for that huge epic war feel, but that game is very rough on new players – it's easy to choose the wrong spawn point, for example. So what we're trying to do is balance something in the Unreal Warfare mode that appeals to everyone.

Will there be a host of new mutators in UT2007?

Rather than having the 30 mutators that were in *UT2004*, where only some were good like Instagib, we're gonna reduce the number of mutators and make sure that the ones we put in there are fun, balanced and can interact with each other. We may also explore classes from a mutator point of view for the Skaarj, Robots, Humans and Necros.

How much playtesting for UT2007 goes on at Epic?

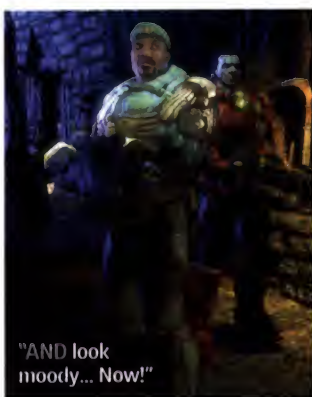
We playtest it every day. Playtesting early in production can sometimes be a challenge because it's ugly or doesn't run well, but what we do is catch little movement things. For example, we felt that the Manta craft was flying too low and conforming to the terrain too much, which was kinda nauseating. We raised the Manta up slightly, so now you feel really good when you're flying around, and when you jump, you feel like you're jumping. You have to have vehicles that are fun to drive even if there's nothing else going on.

Will the different UT races have different vehicles?

All of our 18 vehicles are going to be radically different – there'll be a main armoured battle tank-style vehicle on both teams, for example, but they're not going to be the same. They'll feel different, and have individual weapons.

What about the command structure in Warfare?

We're working on the idea that maybe there isn't an overall commander, but each bunker has its own. If there's no commander, then everything's fine – we have AI commanders up and running – but if somebody wants to go in there and put up a shield because



they know an attack's coming, then that's something they could do. Also, we've discovered that running around the bunkers is great fun for deathmatches, so we're thinking of having all of these different Assault-style nodes that work like switches for various defences, such as gun turrets or mines. You'll be able to configure how the base defends itself.

Any other cool additions to UT2007?

Terrain transformation. We realised early on that nobody knew where the bunker's sensor range for the mini-map started and stopped. Now, if you're on the border of enemy territory you'll know it, because you'll see lush

green grass on your good side, and black and deformed earth on the enemy side. Nobody's really done that in an FPS before, although it's pretty common in RTS games such as *Black & White*.

Will UT2007 have the trademark variety of maps – from gothic castles to techno spaceships?

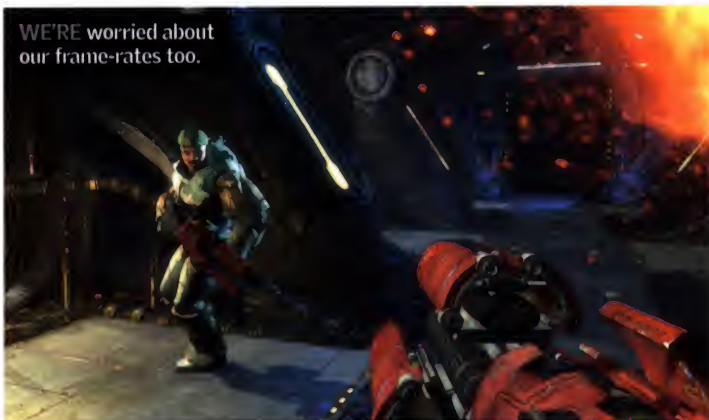
Yeah, the diversity of looks is the real strength of *UT*. We revisit various themes and go nuts on some new ones, but the general idea is that we have concepts for regions – so our robot factory Carbon Fire level is in a region that's part of a high-tech city.

So many great maps have come from the UT community. What if one of our readers made a really cool map?

At the very least we'd buy it – or if they're really talented, we'd give them a job. One of the real strengths of the engine and having the SDK (Software Development Kit) in the products is that you train all these guys up. We'll be giving away the UE3 mod-building and development tools with the launch of *UT2007* again, and can't wait to see what the fans come up with... **PCZ**



All of our 18 vehicles are going to feel radically different, with individual weapons too



JEFF MORRIS

Where he turns for inspiration...



COMIC-BOOKS: Jeff has subscriptions to over 35 titles – Marvel, DC, Dark Horse, Icon, 2000AD...



BLOOD BOWL: Jeff loves the Games Workshop board game and the online version as well.



VINTAGE GAMES: Jeff collects SSI advanced D&D games such as *AI-Qadim: The Genie's Curse*.



SUNNY, MILD WEATHER: Sun produces happy thoughts for Jeff – he's not alone there...

**PCZONE
CHARTS****ChartTrack**

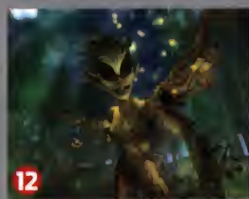
- 1 **NEW** **BLACK & WHITE 2**
Issue 161 93%
- 2 **NEW** **ROME: TOTAL WAR - BARBARIAN INVASION**
Issue 160 88%
- 3 **THE SIMS 2: NIGHTLIFE**
Issue 161 58%
- 4 **NEW** **WARHAMMER 40K: DOW - WINTER ASSAULT**
Issue 161 86%
- 5 **↑** **ROME: TOTAL WAR**
Issue 148 93%
- 6 **NEW** **FIFA 06**
Issue 161 77%
- 7 **NEW** **BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD**
Issue 161 85%
- 8 **NEW** **FIFA MANAGER 06**
Issue 161 70%
- 9 (RE) **WARHAMMER 40K: DAWN OF WAR - GOLD**
Issue 147 81%
- 10 **↓** **BATTLEFIELD 2**
Issue 157 94%
- 11 **↓** **THE SIMS 2**
Issue 147 82%
- 12 **NEW** **FABLE: THE LOST CHAPTERS**
Issue 161 84%
- 13 **NEW** **TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06**
Issue 161 85%
- 14 **↓** **THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY**
Issue 153 57%
- 15 **↓** **GUILD WARS**
Issue 156 94%
- 16 **↓** **WORLD OF WARCRAFT**
Issue 152 95%
- 17 **↓** **DUNGEON SIEGE II**
Issue 159 80%
- 18 **NEW** **SNIPER ELITE**
Issue 160 69%
- 19 **↓** **COMMAND AND CONQUER: GENERALS - DELUXE**
Issue 127 86%
- 20 **NEW** **MYST V: END OF AGES**
Issue 160 87%

**BLACK & WHITE 2**

Extremely popular in these parts, but proving as controversial as its progenitor, Lionhead's epic storms to the front of the herd.

**BROTHERS IN ARMS:
EARNED IN BLOOD**

A worthy seventh place, but watch out for the Unreal 3-powered third chapter soon...

**FABLE: THE LOST CHAPTERS**

Fable, provider of the cheekiest little whorehouse in all of PC gaming, ambles in halfway down the charts.

**MYST V: END OF AGES**

We don't all like *Myst* games. Prez makes us say we do, but we don't. Sometimes he threatens bad things. But we're not all like him.



ROME: lots of roads lead to it.

CAESAR PLEASER



ROME: not built in a day.

www.caesariv.com
ETA: Autumn 2006

Stwike him centuwion, vewwy wuffly

"AND THEN I said 'veni, vidi, vici,' and the Senate was all like, 'no way man, good job,' and I'm just like, 'yeah thanks, whatever'." This is just one of Julius Caesar's many epic stories of victory over obscure tribes from far flung places, that he told around a roaring fire in some Roman tavern, the air heavy with the scent of wine. Not only is the man revered as possibly the finest military leader the world has ever seen, he's also largely believed to have invented dog food.

Caesar IV puts you in such a position, allowing you to experience first-hand what Julius had to put up with on a day-to-day basis. Things like creating road networks to facilitate resources distribution, ensuring that homes have access to entertainment venues, providing fire protection services,

healthcare facilities and so on. Obvious improvements over the ageing *Caesar III* include a whole new dimension (making a total of three), which means that you can look at your city from any angle you can think of (47 degrees, 83 degrees, you name it, it's in there), and the addition of diagonal roads - that's four more directions you can point your streets in. They've also added all-new citizen AI, meaning if a certain Roman hungers for some larks' tongues or otters' noses, they'll go shopping to get it.

The last Caesar game, if you can remember as far back as 1998, was actually quite good, so naturally we've high hopes for the next in the series. Then again, we welcome any opportunity to quote *The Life Of Brian* some more.



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IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

The guy who watches the Watchmen

CHRISTIAN KENNEDY - Game Moderator on *City Of Heroes*

While looking through his emails on his uncle's stone-age PC over in the Philippines, young Christian Kennedy noticed a subject header that read "NCsoft Europe is hiring for *City Of Heroes*!" Now a mod working in Brighton (perennial home of mods and rockers) he works for NCsoft as a hero for hire.

Q So what does your typical day involve?

A Typically, it goes something like: arrive at office, switch on dual PCs, don Spandex uniform and cape, fetch cup of tea or coffee and digestive biscuit, devote time to looking after our customers and monitoring the servers, seek to end injustice and bring about world peace, etc. I believe that the tea and coffee are optional, however.

Do you work from home, or in a massive building full of similarly minded super-mods?

We work from the top floor of an office complex from which I and my fellow mods sally forth to aid those in need with our mighty moderating powers.

What kind of incidents and player behaviour do you keep an eye on?

There are always those that need help. Can't complete that mission? Send out the GM signal! Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No! It's a little police robot with pretty flashing lights, here to help you. We're also the wardens of the laws that govern the *City Of Heroes*, and so we're

ever watchful for those who would abuse their fellow players, or just act in a less than heroic fashion.

How do you deal with difficult customers?

With even-handedness, patience and understanding. And via email. The occasional application of laser eye beams doesn't go amiss either.

What's the most amusing transgression of *COH* rules that you've had to deal with?

We keep an eye out for those that would violate the rules, one of which is against impersonating NCsoft employees. I had a case where a player was trying to 'toll' people for hunting in

a zone under the pretence of prosecuting people for not having a 'hunting licence'. Needless to say, not many were falling for it.

Do *COH* moderators get their own staff room in City Hall?

Unfortunately, we have to make do with our office's delightful little kitchenette. I have called several times for a secret Mighty Moderators HQ located inside the Atlas statue's globe, but my cries go unheeded

Do you anticipate more extreme, abhorrent and villainous behaviour once *City Of Villains* comes out?

Actually, I'm hoping for the opposite. I'm hoping that because the game gives them an outlet for their villainous urges they'll have less of an urge to actually be villainous to each other. A vain hope, I know, but I'll cling to it. Still, maybe they'll finally give me that /disintegrate command that I requested to help me deal with the insolent.



LIVING IN A MATERIAL WORLD

Because every T-Shirt we ever get given is in large, extra large or advertises an Eastern European RTS

The other day one of our number sneezed and got snot all over his hands. With no tissues available he reached for a nearby *Total Overdose* T-Shirt smeared the gunk onto it and threw it away. It's this devil-may-care attitude to gaming merchandise we're trying to cut down on. The bogey-free tat we still have at the end of writing each issue now hits eBay, where we flog it and raise money for the ESC videogaming charity. If you've seen *PC ZONE* on the shelves, then the tat is up online, under our eBay tag 'pczoners'.

Buy our tat at www.ebay.co.uk
All proceeds go to charity, mate...
www.entertainmentsoftwarecharity.org



THIS MONTH'S TAT



WORLD OF WARCRAFT CAP
Pillered from a big pile of swag at Blizzard HQ.



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Straight from the racks at Binco.



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A really, really exciting novel based in the X universe. Looks German.



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WHAT LIES BEYOND?

WORLD OF WARCRAFT: THE BURNING CRUSADE

Exclusive! Convinced that there is life beyond Azeroth, Will Porter steps into the Dark Portal. And vanishes...

THERE IS A LIFE beyond the world as you know it. I know because I've just been there. But right now I'm sitting in an office in Irvine, California, and sitting opposite me is Blizzard's creative director Chris Metzen, the man whose mind provides the motivation every time an orc raises an axe in anger. Every major nugget of *Warcraft* lore has passed through his hands – Frozen Thrones, Dark Portals, you name it. He's the man who gives meaning to your daily grind. He's also a full-on rock star: wide grin, muscular build, dazzling necklace, chunky rings and Bono sunglasses. He's the closest man to Henry Rollins the games industry has. And I'm here to hear him talk Orc.

"There's this guy called Sargaris. He's a fallen titan and an extremely ill-tempered dude," begins Metzen as

he cricks his neck. "Over the ages, he's gathered an army of demons that he calls the Burning Legion and he's set out to eradicate all life within the universe. As the Legion pass through the cosmos, they burn every world they encounter. They show up, destroy all sentient races, consume all magic, refuel and move on. Sargaris is pretty dedicated to wiping out all life and just becoming the ultimate god."

BEYOND THE GRIND


Really? Yesterday my Night-Elf was doing some sexy dancing and killing giant lizards with a bloke from Yorkshire who was a bit worried because his dog

had run off and hadn't come back yet. I struggle to see how this affects me...

But of course it affects me, it affects me hugely: level cap to 70! New race of Blood Elves! Mounts that can fly! I haven't been quite so happy since the man from Yorkshire's dog finally returned, apparently having rolled in something unpleasant. But to understand *The Burning Crusade's* greatness, we have to fully understand from whence it comes. For the uninitiated and if you haven't been worshipping at the Blizzard shrine throughout its days of top-down-ity, a little more exposition is required. Specifically an introduction to the concept of Outland.


"Boy, this is complicated. It's good, but it's complicated," restarts Metzen






OUTLAND: a wrecked planet with a less than welcoming atmosphere.

He's the closest man to Henry Rollins the games industry can provide. And I'm here to hear him talk Orc



QUEL'Thalas: sounds nice, looks nice, actually evil.



THE Quraji: bottle-opening trick is always welcome at parties.

Panda Pops

Bring in the bamboo-guzzling giants!

This is blatant speculation, but I'll stick 20 quid on it being correct if anyone's up for it. The Alliance has no beast race, the Horde does. Until the Blood Elf announcement the Horde had no beautiful race, of which the Alliance has several. So it's a beast race that's needed and it has to be popular, if not strictly one that everyone will want to be due to the Horde/Alliance imbalance. Bring in the giant pandas! Living in an isolated outcrop of North Kalimdor, the Pandarens may be a running gag of sorts, but they're popular with fans. And obviously they're giant pandas – so they might be crap at shagging, but they're second to none at eating bamboo.

from somewhere behind his orange-tinted shades. "Outland is the remnants of the planet Draenor, the world the orcs came from in the first place; we saw a little bit of it in *Warcraft II: Beyond The Dark Portal* many moons ago. It was once a healthy place where the orcs lived. Ultimately, the Burning Legion showed up, took the orcs into their ranks and destroyed the planet. So now all that remains is a series of roughly continent-sized rocks floating in the astral planes that we call the Twisting Nether."

It was from this barren place that a gate was opened through to Azeroth (much loved home of humans, dwarves and elves), the polluted orcs spilled through and much RTS malarkey ensued. Just like a certain famed village in Gaul that stood alone against the Romans, Azeroth became the first world to have ever successfully withstood the assault of Sargaris and his Burning Legion. The

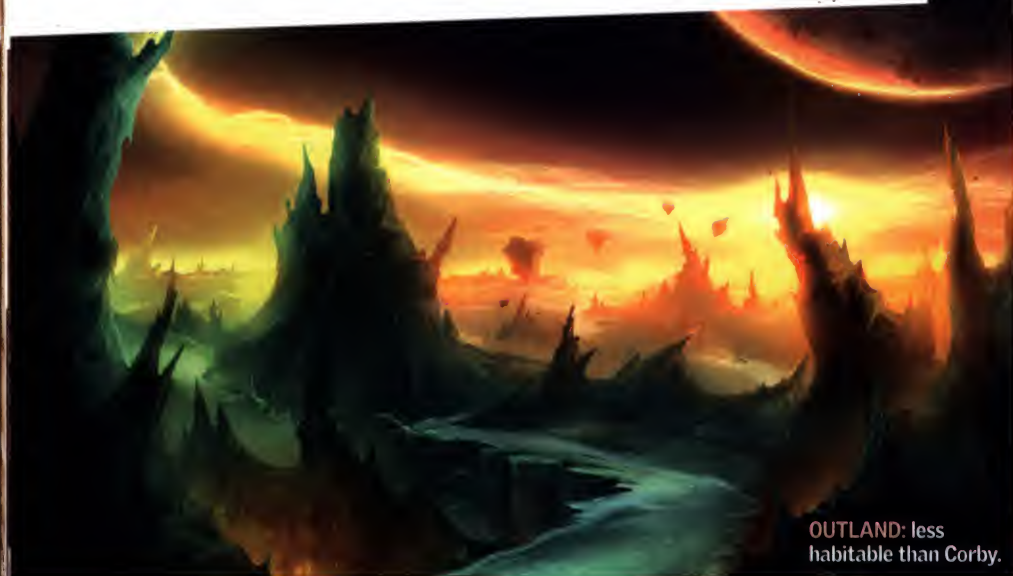
uneasy mix of Alliance and Horde remained, and the setting of the most successful online game of all time was assured. The Dark Portal, meanwhile, stood derelict, mournful and distinctly shut within a part of the *World Of Warcraft* known as Blasted Lands. Shut, at least, until now.

WE ARE NOT ALONE

Outland, a world ripped asunder, is being designed for the upper echelons of players, those wanting to wade into the extra ten levels provided by the expansion with gusto until they hit the 70 mark and enter into a mission that will provide them with a flying mount – a Nether Dragon, no less. Instead of being race-specific as they are in Azeroth, these flying beasts of the Nether Storm will be available to all – although they won't be able to survive back on home territory, so you can

forget any pipedreams you may have of divebombing newbies on their first bat-ride out of the UnderCity. However, what they can do is take you to all manner of hard-to-reach places, dungeons and secret areas as soon as you hit the mythical level of three score and ten.

Outland won't all be floating rocks and orange haze though: there'll be lush areas such as Zangar Marsh, and plenty of human and orc wreckage from the battles that raged on the past few occasions that the portal has been flung open. The story has it that Horde and Alliance alike are flooding in to deal with the Burning Legion, with the orcs more than intrigued by the prospect of being able to trace their family tree and meet the ancestors. My own Night Elf, the sexy ElfieMoon, meanwhile, will want to have a stiff talk with chief



OUTLAND: less habitable than Corby.



THE Dark Portal as seen in the past – less funny, more deadly.

Putting a socket in it

Purveyors of minute etchings express joy at increased fiddling



As if *WOW* wasn't anal enough, *The Burning Crusade* introduces a socketing system that'll make objects and artefacts even more customisable to you. The system, last seen in *Diablo 2*, will allow you to shove gems and items of similar magical-ness into holes in swords, shields and the like, so boosting their power and attractiveness in the brochure at the auction house. To go with this, a new profession of jewelcrafting will be provided – so by the time of release, every single guild will have a bunch of spotty herberts waving magic broaches, but still no-one will be able to heal.

elfin bad man Illidan in his Black Temple in Shadowmoon Valley. But, of course, this expansion isn't all about this new frontier: Blizzard isn't keen on emptying Azeroth of its high-level players, so there's tons of new content dotted around the place – not least with a spot of time-travel in the Caverns of Time.

CAVERNS OF WHAT?

That's right, your *WOW* character is about to make an amazing journey through time and space to some of the most pivotal moments in *Warcraft* history – all thanks to a handy dungeon managed by a Flight of Bronze Dragons whose humdrum task is to police the timestream. Although they're clearly not very good at it, seeing as anyone of sufficient level (and owning the expansion pack) will be able to wander into their Tanaris lair, speed up to 88mph and hurtle through history. You'll be there on the Black Morass the day the Black Portal was opened, before the land was blighted and split between the Blasted Land and the Swamp of Sorrows, with an environment being made pixel for pixel just as it was in *Warcraft II*. You'll be one of a party who rescue future orc leader Thrall from a distinctly non-ruined and highly turreted



SILVER Moon City: quiet, peaceful, serene. Until the Blood Elves wake up...

Durnhold keep. You'll even be present atop Mount Hyjal on the fateful day in Reign of Chaos when all the races joined together to put the boot into the wicked bad Archimonde.

Now, admittedly if you didn't get picked last for playground football, you might not be quite as turned on as I am by all this. However, you show me an undead player who doesn't go all a-quiver when they discover that you'll be able to visit the distinctly non-dismal red roofs of the Tarren Mill of the past, having ironic banter with NPCs that run along the lines of, "What a pleasant town. I'm so glad I'm not a zombie.

Aren't you dear?", and I'll show you a *WOW* player who's dead on the inside.

But how can we have come this far without mentioning the Blood Elves? They're bad you know, bad to the bone. One quirky Blizzard employee informed



LOOK! One tarren mill: no zombies.



"IT'S lovely darling! Let's move here straight away!"



We want it to be Alliance and Horde kicking the hell out of each other

Chris Metzen, creative director, Blizzard

Mobile Disco

Txting Ur Orcion wlns str8 2 u! Gr8! ILU Bliz



In planning stages and not yet on the reality radar, Blizzard is planning a system in which you'll be able to check the goings-on at the auction house on your mobile from public transport, the office and the times at which your significant other thinks that she's managed to hoodwink you into spending some quality time with her. Whether or not this proposal is a good thing or a sign of the coming apocalypse is yet to be ascertained.

THE Blood Elves: there goes the neighbourhood.

me that they're essentially "crack addicts on magic", although this failed to make any impression on me since I was too busy feeling slightly guilty. Guilty that I find the female Blood Elf model slightly more attractive than my own life-partner, the sexy ElfieMoon. Sorry dear. Looks like I'm turning Horde.

PROMISED LAND

Located to the north of Eastern Plaguelands (you may have noticed some handily fallen giant trees that cross a local abyss in the vicinity), the Blood Elf land of Quel'Thalas and its capital of Silvermoon City are designed to be at complete odds with pre-existing Horde starting points like the harsh and arid Durotar. It's ornate, beautiful and slightly tinged with the trappings of the sinister as Blood Elves go about their business; experimenting with nature, trapping demons in vials and attempting to extract their magical juices.

As the first Horde race that isn't ugly or disfigured, you can bet your boots that a part of their role is to sort out the distinct Horde-Alliance imbalance on most servers, which suggests that the unannounced second noob race could well be somewhat beast-like (see 'Panda Pops, p43). All I know is that I really, really want to be one of these sexy elves, and with its three zones of tainted



NO, we don't know what it is either...

forests, sunny isles and a high level area with an unhappy group of local trolls, its highly likely that a heap of other players will feel the same way.

Any swing to the blood-red left, however, will be countered by the rolling live updates (of which there are many planned), and a raft of other Battlegrounds, Dungeons and Raidzones being packaged with the expansion.

What Blizzard really wants though, is to make Horde and Alliance hate each other a bit more – and it's plotting out the Outland segments of *The Burning Crusade* to up ante in the competition between the forces of good and evil. "We really want to get back into the theme

where it's Alliance and Horde kicking the hell out of each other, because that's good times," grins Metzen.

That's what it's all about really, isn't it? That and killing monsters, grinding your way through levels, ignoring the pleas of your wife, growing distant from real life, losing your job and eventually being found dead, naked and alone. But let's not ponder on that: Blood Elves are ace! 111! **PCZ**

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PCZONE

REVIEWS

Dishing out the gongs for PC gaming

SECTION EDITOR Paul Presley

Stunt Monkey

A LETTER HAS flooded into my office from a Mrs Ethel Kinevel (no relation) of Swanton Abbott, enquiring into the apparent incongruity between the wizened, elder statesman-like utterings of my written character, and the vibrant, dashing, youthful, impossibly handsome and virile young buck who adorns the top of this page. "Thems don't tally," she scrawls in green ink...

Well, it's time for the truth. The man you see above is in fact my professional stunt double. While Prezzlewick the elder sits and hammers words torn from the fabric of his fertile mind, young Prez (real name: Gerald McSwinson) is busy attending social gatherings, opening supermarkets and dating supermodels in an attempt to boost my public profile with the masses.

Everyone should have a stunt double. Not only do they handle the monotonous day-to-day drudgery of falling from the tops of buses and diving through plate-glass windows, they become quite the ice-breaker at parties and are handy for holding coats when the rain stops without warning and the sun breaks through for 20 minutes of unseasonal warmth.

So I hope that answers your question, Ethel. Who's next?

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ON THE DISCS
Good news! Check out the cover DVD for a playable demo.

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	1	2	3	4	5
CPU	1.2GHz	1.8GHz	2.4GHz	3.0GHz	3.8GHz
RAM	128MB	256MB	512MB	1GB	1GB
Video	32MB	128MB	256MB	512MB	512MB

ALSO REVIEWED

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CALL OF DUTY 2

It's back, and it wants you conscripted. *Will Porter* always knew that we'd meet again, some sunny day...



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AT A GLANCE...

World War II in all its blood-spattered glory – as seen from the south (North Africa), the east (the Russian front), the west (the bullet-ridden bits of France) but unfortunately not the north (the Nazis didn't get that far). A lot of chaos, a lot of smoke and a lot of German-smiting ensues.

System requirements **4**

HOW IT STACKS

CALL OF DUTY 2	91%
BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD	85%
MEDAL OF HONOR: PACIFIC ASSAULT	79%

THE search for Gatwick continued.



THREE HOURS INTO *Call Of Duty 2* and the guns have fallen silent.

Smoke is billowing around me, I can barely see the muzzle of my own gun and I'm attempting to have a rest.

Crouching behind the shell of a Russian car, I've just chucked one of *Call Of Duty's* new-found smoke grenades, with the sole intention of grabbing a few valuable seconds of inaction. My eyes hurt, I'm too engrossed to tap the escape key and brew myself a cup of tea, yet somehow the war is going to have to wait. If I play any more then I'll be more overwhelmed than is mentally healthy. Unfortunately, however, a less publicised fault of the Nazi regime proves to be impatience – and I soon find myself beaten into the

car's door panelling for my inability to keep up. As expected, *Call Of Duty 2* is relentless. And really rather good.

Is it starting off with a bit of a handicap though? Has the saturation of our cherished gaming media with the pastel shades of the early 1940s numbed us somewhat to whatever Russian, British and American goodness lies in *Call Of Duty 2*?

Y'see, we're still not a million miles away from where we were last time round: beach landings, gun emplacements, helmets that fly off, Nazis firing off a few pistol rounds with their dying breaths, guns that go ping... But how different do we really want it to be?

We've still got a powerful mix of breathless action, dynamic scripting and the whole A-Z gamut of human emotion:

hope, fear, exhilaration and everything that lies in between. The faces may be more craggy, the lighting may be more impressive, the smoke may be thicker and more billowy – but in terms of that eternal *COD* feeling of hiding behind something solid and not really wanting to come out, we've barely moved on at all. And thank Christ for that.

But of course, a lot has changed – some for the better and some for the worse. However, in order to examine just how far we've come (and how in a few cases we've taken a few steps back), we'll have to take



off our rose-tinted spectacles for just a few minutes. I know it hurts. *Call Of Duty* may have brought the *Allied Assault* template forward an infinite number of clicks, but it remained linear, scripted and packed with Allies who could only die at the whims of a level. Despite how great it all was, the essential ebbs and flows of real battle were missing – it was largely push, push, push, and the main surprises were provided by script rather than foe. It also had some solo missions in chateaus and dams that were complete turd.

WE DON'T LIKE TURD

So let's take a look at a typical level that redresses this balance, the prestigious D-Day landing and the start of an

American campaign that (typically, my grandad would say) kicks off quite a substantial way into the game proper.

It starts, as you'd imagine, with familiar *Saving Private Ryan* territory – the worried faces, the vomit, the slow-motion bloodshed and incessant first-

out from your position with their individual trenches, bunkers, smoke, mortar explosions and soldiers doing ragdoll backflips. After a death and a load, and a few more deaths and subsequent loads, the battle is developing and you genuinely start to feel that the Bosch are

It mixes breathless action with the whole A-Z gamut of human emotion

person, cinematic bombast. So far, so *Call Of Duty*. Having reached the top of the cliff, however, things turn a bit different. Your way across the battlefield isn't sign-posted; different routes each with different likelihoods of death spread

retreating: through a farmstead, up to a crossroads and up to the massive gun emplacements you've been searching for.

This is where the last game would end the level, but now you're sent back as the threat of



Time Saved



COD2 specialises in wide open spaces. And you're often screaming...



counter-offence begins to brew – heading back to mop up opposition holed up in bunkers on the mortar-pocked battlefield. Then the (thousand-year) Empire strikes back: pushing you backwards and then further backwards, until you're practically on the lip of the cliff and praying for salvation. This is how real battle works: the front moving back

and forth, points being captured and recaptured. Similarly, when clearing a town or a trainyard, you're now presented with objectives you can clear in the order of your choice, which you often do the most obvious way anyway, but it's a nice gesture. Yes, the game remains a linear experience, but Infinity Ward has tossed a smoke grenade into affairs to keep you on your toes.

The best innovations of the game stem from this, specifically the new-found freedom and AI bestowed upon enemies and Allies as they interact with the large-scale environment and large-scale opposition. Now we're not talking *F.E.A.R.* levels of cleverness here – they don't have a particularly almighty sense of self-preservation – but when you take a step back and watch your friendly AI working through cover, it's really quite impressive.

GOING GREAT GUNS

As, indeed, is the way that forces of the Reich will respond to your encroachment – either hunkering down or retreating through cover (some just legging it, others taking potshots at you). Or indeed, making your boys do the same. What brings even more chaos to the battlefield, meanwhile, is that friend and foe alike can dynamically shoot each other, without adhering strictly to the diktat of intricate game scripting.

This means there'll be many, many occasions where you'll be staring down the muzzle of an angry German's gun (making comedy gulping noises if you so wish), only

"CAN you hang on just one sec Mr Fritz?"



3 Smoke
3 Frag
0 1

GUN emplacements: friend of the FPS since 1997.



1 Smoke

3 Frag

5 | 79

to be saved at the last second by a neat headshot from a member of your band of brothers in arms.

Don't underestimate the visceral dazzlement that'll come from having so many peeps on-screen either. If I stood here waving my arms and reeling out all the best moments of *COD2*, then my hyperbole would probably outlast the game itself (which is slightly longer than the last one by the way, but not by much). However, there's an absolute humdinger in the North-African British campaign.

You and your plucky Brit mates (what ho, etc) have to defend a small outpost from all angles from the Krauts, racing from north to south to east to north again in an attempt to stem their flow – but what a flow. Coming from an impressive distance, and eventually accompanied by tanks, they swarm over the dunes with such intensity that hoodlums could break into your house while you're playing, sneak up behind you and steal valuable computer peripherals from beneath your feet without you noticing.

There's absolutely no argument that the *Call Of Duty* phenomenon of having set-pieces that cause you to sit bolt upright and murmur stuff like, "F*** me. I mean really, f*** me. God he's got a rocket thing... F*** me!" remains true. Plus, it occurs with far more regularity in *COD2*, especially once you hit the US missions. Infinity Ward has created a game that can perfectly synchronise with the pumping of adrenalin around your body (best experienced in the tour-de-force penultimate mission on Hill 400), where AI and script meld nigh-on

perfectly and cause many calm scenes to be meditated upon in vague attempts at mental recovery.

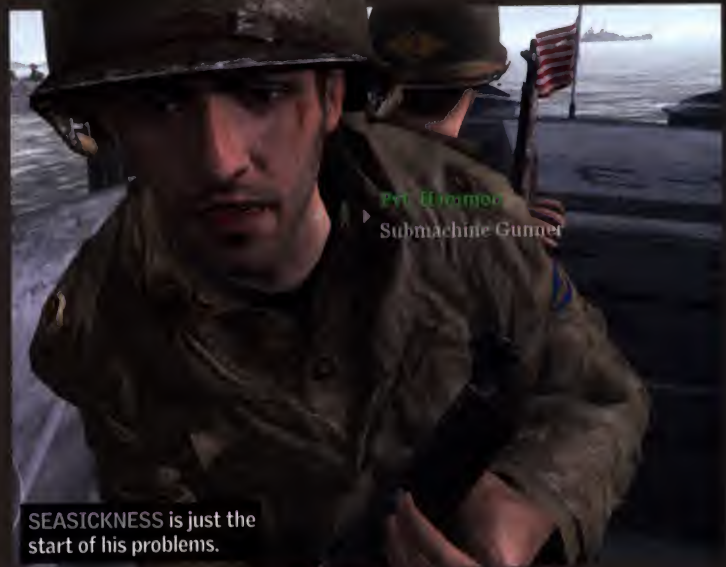
JER-RY! JER-RY!

Nothing in this life, however, is perfect – these past few paragraphs may have seen me loved up by *Call Of Duty 2*, but unfortunately there's more than one ominous *Jerry Springer*-style empty chair sitting next to us. Over to you Jerry...

"So, let's all welcome spawning! An FPS feature that Will hates, but who's been sleeping with *COD* for the past six months!" Cue chairs flying.



NOTE the handy grenade indicator. Er, you're buggered.



SEASICKNESS is just the start of his problems.

Smoky and the Bandits

Don't want to stare death in the face? Then simply obscure it!



Grenades account for about 60 per cent of your deaths in *COD2* – they've been shoved into the limelight far further than before, although they're somewhat overshadowed by new kid on the block, the smoke grenade. Trouble with an MG42? Allies being shot from a distance? Just want to look at the pretty swirly effects and bring chaotic blindness down upon one and all? Then the smoke grenade is your man, or indeed your delayed particle release system. The heights of *Call Of Duty 2* are hit when Allies and Krauts are mixed in either the surreal silence or absolute chaos of a smoke-choked street (guerrillas in the mist, if you will), and smoke grenades prove to be a lot more than a pretty particle effect.



FOR once, tanks aren't needed.



"GENERAL Von Klinkerhoffen is going to have my neck..."



EARLY Russian missions set the destructive pace.



4 Smoke

MANY stunt NPCs died in the making of *COD2*.

Be grandad

Popular *COD* multiplayer smiles for the KillCam



COD multiplayer, with its neat KillCam that lets you trace the path that led to your death, was a surprise hit last time – so it's not unsurprising it hasn't been changed much. We now have smoke shenanigans, ragdolls and the new health system, but everything remains imbued with the same sense of weight and urgency. Headquarters mode, where action is centred around sites where base-building radios may or may not be about to appear, remains the highlight – while the structure of some of the maps on offer is pure genius.

Well, maybe not flying. I realise that the spawning of enemies (and friendlies) is entirely necessary to complete the illusion that warfare is constant and raging all around you. Now this isn't something that plays out in the whole game, only when the flow of the game desires it, but I can't help but feel that the Nazi pop-up rate is a little too speedy for my liking.

A more universal call of complaint, meanwhile, will be the perennial *Call Of Duty* factor of character and story – of which the games boast none. It's not *COD*'s style to come up with a moving scene that involves childhood sweethearts or Mom's apple pie – it would much rather provide a brilliant set-piece where a plane does a strafing run down the street you're on that makes you shout: "Shit!" Now, this is fine.

It's a colossal achievement that anyone with a taste for action should sample

I agree *COD* games don't need a spoon-fed story. But, having slotted in a few somewhat persistent characters (particularly in the British campaign, with a grumpy working-



DUST, smoke, bullets, chaos. Welcome back *COD*!

class Scot and spiffy stiff-upper-lipped toff), a nugget of main character progression, or indeed death, would have paid dividends. I may love the way in which campaigns unlock themselves as you work through the game, meaning that if you want a change of scenery then you can swap between Stalingrad and North Africa

train carriage followed by a screen saying 'The End') then just wait until you see what's on offer here. Or rather, what isn't.

BROKEN RECORD

Third chair in my loose and not particularly good *Jerry Springer* analogy, meanwhile, is an old familiar – a chestnut, if you will. Yes, it's a slight dose of consolitis. But wait! Don't run off and tell everyone that Will told you that *COD2* is consoley, that's not true. I'm just saying that there are a few features in here that have probably been developed with the dual release on the Xbox 360 in mind. Namely, some tank missions that see you rumbling around the desert, that may not be awful but certainly

PLANE-blasting: the game's rare dip into *MOH* mediocrity.

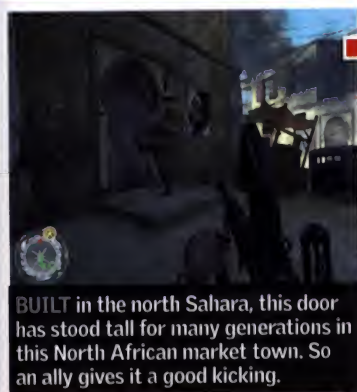


"DAMN it Jenkins! Put that Kung Fu away!"



WHO'S THERE?

As mentioned often and repeatedly both here and elsewhere, AI and scripting are merged nigh-on seamlessly in *Call Of Duty 2*. Not least here, with a soldier who comes a-cropper, Jehovah's Witness-style...



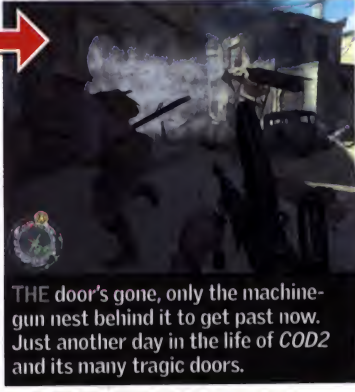
BUILT in the north Sahara, this door has stood tall for many generations in this North African market town. So an ally gives it a good kicking.



WITH little regard for local carpentry or the dangers of flying shards of wood, the wicked Nazis have placed an MG42 behind said ancient door.



THERE'S wood in the sand, there's wood in the walls, there's wood in the soldier. Who's going to clear up this mess? Not us, there's a war to be won!



THE door's gone, only the machine-gun nest behind it to get past now. Just another day in the life of *COD2* and its many tragic doors.

aren't needed by the game proper. They also stretch credibility a bit too far for those entrenched within the minutiae of PC gaming. I mean, shooting several thousand Nazis without dying I can understand, but tanks with shells that reload in less than eight seconds? That's just barking.

The health system is similarly controversial. Essentially, you no longer gain health in the time-honoured way of collection health packs or getting a magic jab from a passing medic – you can do it all on your own, by cowering behind street furniture and waiting until the increasingly bloody tinge of your monitor has gone and your heavy breathing has subsided.

This improves the flow of the game no end – there's no more rooting around in the bathtubs of rural villages – but it comes at a price in the lower difficulty settings. You swiftly come to realise that you can be shot a few times without having to worry, which means a fair chunk of intensity is lost. This said, in multiplayer, the magical regeneration works perfectly.

Blimey. What a lot of moans about an excellent game. And I haven't even said anything about the eventually grating Brit habit of screaming "Bloody wanker!" and "Jerry rotter!", nor the game's fixation with calling stick grenades "potato mashers".

A LOT OF LOVE

Don't get me wrong, this is a superb game – it's just that when put in the context of such gaming brilliance, then flaws become all the more obvious. This is a game where tanks rumble over the trenches you're cowering in, where you stand quaking in a stranded outpost waiting that terrifying extra second before Nazis charge through the billowing smoke, and a game where the art of

the ragdoll has been perfected through a wonderful blend of physics and animation.

It's a game with more loving incidental detail than I have ever seen, from the near-dead Nazi crawling for his gun (or indeed those staggering, running or dead), to the marvellous Russian mission in which the pipe you're sneaking through is peppered with bullets and daylight streams through the perforations. It's a fundamentally colossal achievement that anyone with a taste for action should sample.

Put simply, other shooters like to put you in control: you're the one controlling gravity, you're the one in the shadows with the lethal take-down, or you're the one with the silky skills and the ability to slow down time. Infinity Ward wants none of that muck: it wants screaming, smoke, flying bodies, chaos and you running around with goggle-eyes, jaw-hanging and tongue-lolling, wondering where the next hail of bullets is going to come from. It doesn't want to make you feel cool, it wants to pulverise you. And with linearity now fairly disguised, ramped-up AI and tremendous visual bombast, it does so repeatedly. Are we fed up with WWII? We're certainly getting there. Are we fed up with *Call Of Duty*? Not for a good while yet... **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics	When in motion, even better than the screenshots suggest
Sound	Impeccable, if slightly repetitive in battle chat
Multiplayer	Just as good as before, only now with smoke

- ✓ Chaotic, mental, bewildering, bewitching
- ✓ Brilliantly designed set-pieces
- ✓ Faux non-linearity and ace smoke grenades
- ✓ Multiplayer good as ever
- ✗ Bobbins ending, pointless tank sections
- ✗ Controversial new health system

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World War: Woo!



"Winner, Best RPG of E3"

– Game Critics Award, GameSpot, IGN,
GameSpy, Xbox Evolved, Console Gold,
Daily Game, Games Domain



"This is going to be special"

– Xbox World



"Destined to be mind-blowing"

– PC Gamer



"Hottest RPG of 2005"

– PC Zone

The RPG for the Next Generation





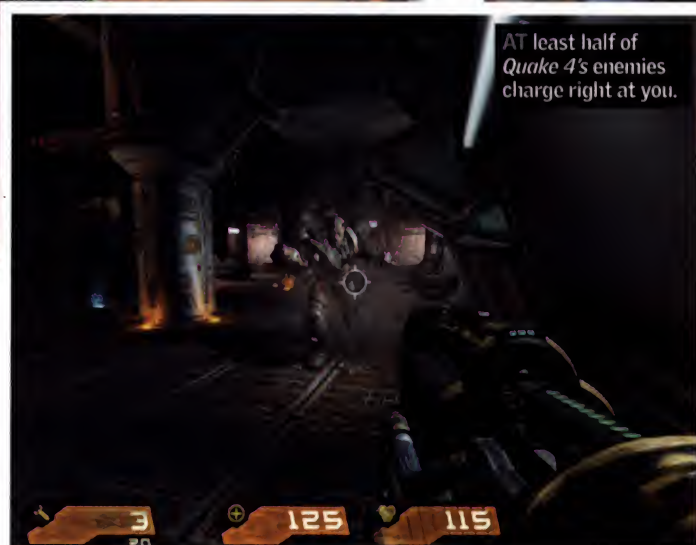
The Elder Scrolls IV

OBLIVION™

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NAUGHTY, naughty Mr Trump, you've not been flossing have you?



AT least half of Quake 4's enemies charge right at you.

QUAKE 4

Martin Korda goes to war once more, to see if the off and online worlds can be as one...

DEVELOPER Raven/id Software
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE
www.quake4game.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £39.99



AT A GLANCE...

Entertaining, if overly predictable single-player game which charts the war between humanity and the Strogg. Then once you're done with that, it's time to experience the purest deathmatch experience ever.

System requirements 3

HOW IT STACKS

HALF-LIFE 2 97%

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004 91%

QUAKE IV 84%

IT'S OFFICIAL, **QUAKE** deathmatch is back and it's faster and better-looking than ever, pitting you and up to 15 others in a furious futuristic joust. Never before has there been a multiplayer shooting experience like it, a challenge of skill that's so utterly pure and unadulterated. All of the chaos, all of the anger and every last drop of mayhem from *Quake III* has been siphoned out and rammed into an engine so sublime that it

practically sucks you through your monitor and spits you out into another world, where a split-second can separate the vanquished from the victor.

But enough about *Quake 4*'s multiplayer... For now anyway. Why? Because, my frag-frenzied friend, unlike its predecessor, *Quake 4* isn't being sold as a multiplayer game. Y'see, some people whinged about

Quake III: Arena's lack of single-player action. They moaned and they complained – then went off and made some tea – then they came back and moaned some more.

And so, in an attempt to alleviate their bleating, and in an effort to bring the best parts of *Quake II* and *III* into one unified and all-conquering whole, id and

Raven decided a return to the single-player campaigns of yore to complement what is undoubtedly the purest deathmatch experience in the known universe. Including Wigan town centre on a Saturday night. Yes, that pure.

A NEW CAMPAIGN

So, what's the single-player game like? Well, you play as Kane – a soldier embroiled in the seemingly never-ending Human/Strogg conflict (from *Quake II*), sent to an enemy planet to execute a daring raid that could turn the tide of the war. What follows is a rampaging ride of destruction, punctuated by periods of exposition and some slick cut-scenes that build the tension and raise the stakes ever higher as the campaign progresses, while a surprising plot twist halfway through adds some extra spice.



"IS it just me, or is there a spark between us?"



WHO ate all the pies?



BET he's popular with the ladies.

Your adventure is further enhanced by the stupendous *Doom 3* engine, which makes your dark, sinister surroundings look more drop-dead gorgeous than Elle McPherson on a bed of cold meats, though admittedly, outdoor areas are still a problem. The physics are also almost beyond reproach, conveying a true sense of weight and realism to *Quake 4*'s alien world, despite the occasionally erratic tumble taken by a felled opponent.

As for the combat, it's also a winner. Visceral, intense, challenging... Every bit the blood-caked battlefield we'd hoped it would be. From the opening mission to the final titanic confrontation, your trigger skills are tested to breaking point, especially on the higher difficulty levels that'll have even the most hardened FPS-nut pounding his (or her) fists in frustration.

WORLD OF HURT

Straight from the off, you're submerged into a world that genuinely looks and sounds like a warzone. Incessant, panicked radio chatter from other strike teams bursts through your headphones, and new orders filter down from command HQ as you scythe your way through wave after wave of pug-ugly nasties. Medics and technicians heal you and restore your armour – perhaps a little too often if truth be told – while certain

specialists even beef up your weapons and make them more powerful and versatile.

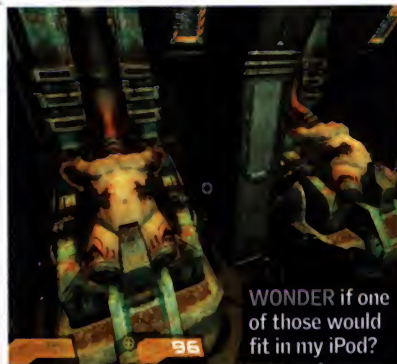
The feeling of isolation so prevalent in *Doom 3* is nowhere to be seen, with solo missions often morphing into team-based affairs, pitting you and AI-controlled comrades against overwhelming enemy forces. Plus, with a well-judged soundtrack – satisfyingly booming effects beefing up the atmosphere still further – you're never in any doubt that this is a world at war.

ENEMY WITHIN

Of course, all the atmosphere in the world is for nothing if a shooter's AI isn't up to scratch; and while *Quake 4* is unlikely to win any awards for this, it doesn't disappoint either.

Manpower

Who needs Duracell when you've got dismembered humans?



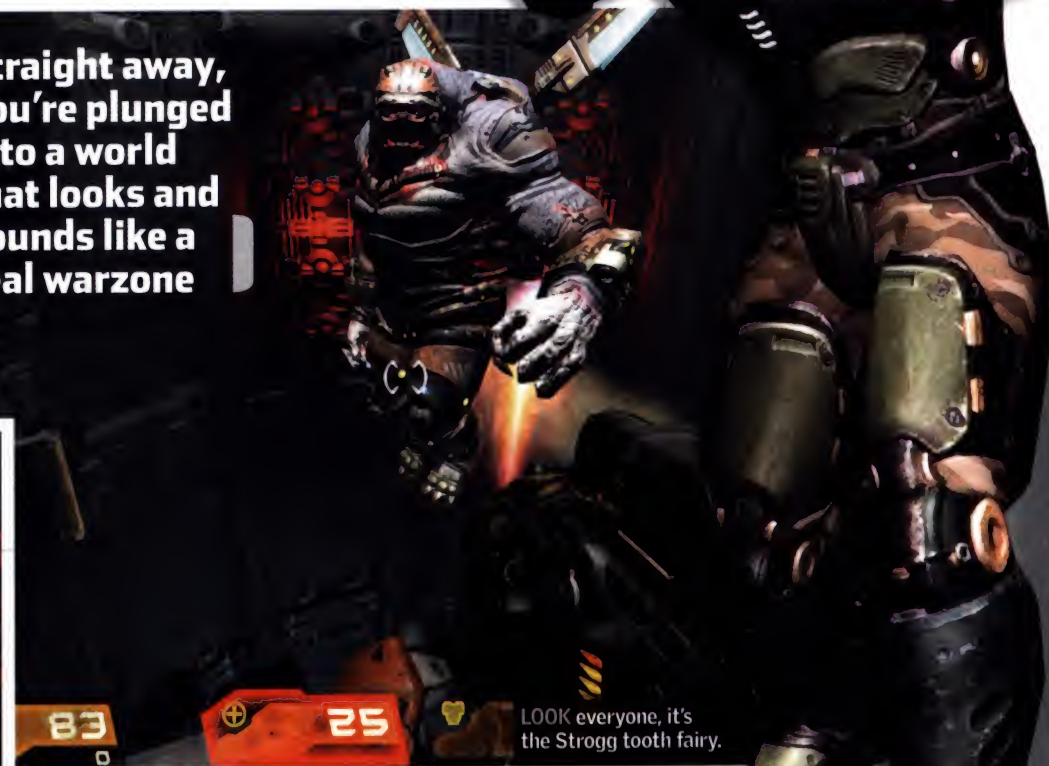
In case you were wondering why there are so many dismembered bodies in these screenshots, allow us to explain. One of the horrific discoveries you make during your adventure is that the Strogg use human bodies as a source of power. And while this explanation is clearly little more than a thinly disguised excuse to make *Quake 4*'s levels look ultra-creepy, it does prove to be a hugely effective method of making every mission hugely unsettling. So much so, you'll be running down to the corner shop to stock up on man-sized Huggies.

Strogg grunts in particular, harness their surroundings with lifelike intelligence, resulting in subtly strategic firefights as you and your AI-controlled comrades take cover and play cat and mouse against an equally ensconced enemy. And while other enemies' more direct, head-on attacks aren't so impressive, there's just about enough variation for things never to get too stale during the six to ten hours it'll take to complete the game.

Top bad guy billing must go to the much-vaunted Gladiator, a towering warrior armed with a shoulder-mounted laser and an energy



Straight away, you're plunged into a world that looks and sounds like a real warzone





AS well as being useful for hanging up pictures, the nail gun is great for killing giant spiders.



shield, who's so mean he'd probably spit his lead fillings at you if he thought they'd do you some damage. These boys are no easy kill – especially once their shield is up – and without lashings of skill and speed you'll soon wear the reload key down to a stump.

SIZE ISN'T EVERYTHING

Quake 4's collection of mammoth (health bar-toting) bosses are somewhat of a disappointment, though. Brilliantly introduced through ever rising tension and lush cut-scenes, the majority of them turn out to not only be less intelligent than a garden rake but also incredibly easy to dispose of.

And let's not forget the much-vaunted, all-new vehicular sections, which see you either manning stationary weapons while someone else takes the wheel, or piloting the likes of hover tanks and walkers. What are they like? Well, I'm sorry to say, they're also a bit of a letdown. Despite these sections' obvious appeal, they're likely to leave you flatter than a catwalk model's chest that's just had a nasty encounter with a trouser press. They just feel as though they've been lifted straight out of a console game – more *Halo* than *Quake* – and as a result are often little more than mildly entertaining distractions that break up the on-foot shootouts. Pity.

So, despite a few shortfalls, everything you'd expect and wish for from a single-player *Quake* campaign is here. Frenetic action: check. Huge end-of-level bosses: check. Lots of satisfying weaponry: check. Zombies: check. Yup, it's all there.

Then of course there are the staples of any modern day FPS. Vehicular combat: check. Scripted moments that depict the hideous deaths of your comrades: check. Ambient conversations between periphery characters that fill in background information: check. Again, all there.

So why is it, despite all this, I can't help but feel that *Quake 4's* solo campaign is fundamentally lacking

Usual Suspects

New look, same weapons?



For the most part, *Quake 4's* weapons are exactly the same as *Quake III's*, although they have all had a makeover. Disappointingly, there's still no secondary fire option for any of them, which has to go down as an opportunity missed.

Old favourites like the lightning gun, plasma rifle, rocket launcher and rail gun make a welcome return, and the gauntlet has been replaced by a pistol with infinite ammo in the single-player game – though thankfully not in multiplayer. However, receiving the biggest 'welcome back!' bearhug is the nail gun, which proves every bit as meaty as you'd expect, though it's still not a patch on the BFG, which reprises its original area damage model.

Still, perhaps the best weapon idea in *Quake 4* is also the game's simplest. In single-player, only your two weakest weapons are fitted with a torch. Given the shadow-filled nature of the game, that leaves you with rather an interesting choice. Light and a crap weapon, or darkness and a powerful one? The decision is yours.



LOVE me.

HERE COMES THE BOSS

Quake 4's end-of-level bosses might not be very original, but they sure are big – and they're introduced in ways that'll shit you up good and proper...



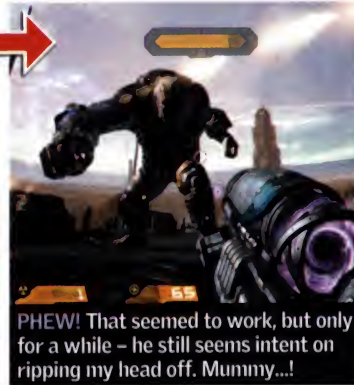
DON'T let this guy's 417-inch waist fool you, that jetpack makes him one nippy customer.



SEE? What's more, he's got very, very sharp teeth. Still, at least I'm safe behind this lift's bullet-proof glass.



MAYBE not. This guy's big, fast, agile and very, very strong. Maybe I should distract him in some jovial manner...



PHIEW! That seemed to work, but only for a while – he still seems intent on ripping my head off. Mummy...!

something? Perhaps it's because there's such a fine line these days between harking back to past glories through intelligently-judged homage, and blatantly recreating what's come before; *Quake 4* never even comes close to pushing any FPS boundaries.

exploding barrels, and bosses with health bars over their heads that are easier to outsmart than a toddler?

What's more, it's a sad day when one of the founding fathers of the PC first-person shooter genre is watered down with

but it does make it a lesser game than it could and should have been.

FIGHT!

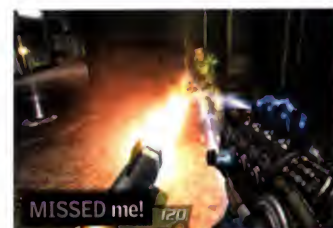
Which brings me back to multiplayer – the part of this package that really shines, standing out like a beacon of such brilliance that most other deathmatch (and CTF, TDM and Last Man Standing) experiences are dazzled into submission. The new levels are masterfully created, each one requiring a subtly different approach than the next, while never losing the exhilaration factor. And if that's not enough, there's even a return for a few old favourites such as DM17. Sure, you could argue it's much the same as *Quake III*, but the point here is that no-one else does pure seat-of-your-Y-fronts deathmatching quite like *Quake*.

By all means, enjoy the single-player game, marvel at its visuals, groan at its clichés and enjoy its firefights. However, I can guarantee that six months from now, as you fly through the air firing rockets and screaming in rage in an attempt to take out that railgunning

bastard who's just fried your brains five times in quick succession – while all around bodies explode into a thousand blood-caked giblets – you'll have forgotten all about it. That's the beauty of deathmatch. That's the beauty of *Quake 4*. **PCZ**



DAMN, missed the No.4 bus again.



MISSED me! 120



PCZONE

Graphics Awesome and terrifying
Sound Guttural, booming and atmospheric
Multiplayer Utterly sublime DM, TDM, CTF and Tourney

- ✓ Incredible graphics and physics
- ✓ Excellent combat
- ✓ Brilliant multiplayer
- ✗ Single-player campaign a little too derivative
- ✗ Vehicle sections feel very consoley
- ✗ No bots in multiplayer

84

Stale and the stupendous with stunning looks



THE MOVIES

Having spent enough time in the make-up department, *Paul Presley* is finally ready for his close-up, Mr DeMille...

DEVELOPER Lionhead Studios
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE
www.lionhead.com/themovies
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99



AT A GLANCE...

Be Don Simpson in the safety of your own home. Run your own studio, nurture your own stars and make your own films. Then share them online. Funniest game for years...

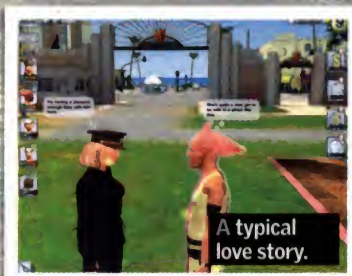
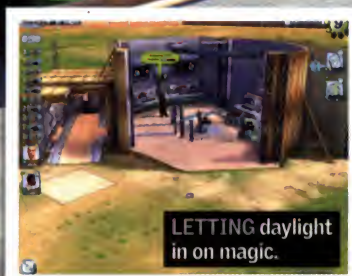
System requirements 3

HOW IT STACKS

THE MOVIES 95%

BLACK & WHITE 2 93%

THE SIMS 2 82%





Gotta sing, gotta dance

Expansion packs we'd like to see:

NO.1 - MUSICALS



Sadly, you're limited to the five basic movies genres – sci-fi, comedy, action, romance and horror – although there's certainly plenty of scope within each to pretty much do what you want. However, there are some obvious omissions, one of which being the classic musical numbers of the '30s and '40s. Busby Berkeley, *Lullaby Of Broadway*, overhead shots with hundreds of tap dancers in the shape of swastikas and so on.

With Lionhead's famous love of innovative control systems, you could even go as far as adding a rudimentary karaoke/*SingStar* microphone affair for the big numbers – you can already record your own dialogue, so it's not that much of a stretch. Besides, most of the actors of the day had their singing voices dubbed, so it would add that air of authenticity to the proceedings.



DO YOU KNOW, I really can't remember the last time any game has so captivated my time, my imagination and my enthusiasm as much as *The Movies*. I think about it when I should be working. I think about it on the train on the way home. I think about it while staring into space on the lav. I think about it when I should be conversing with my wife over dinner. I'm even thinking about it now. I'm doing a lot of thinking is what I'm saying.

Why? Because it's the kind of game that lets you unleash your creative side in ways other than just finding cool new methods for killing people.

The Movies is about making films. You start by creating a studio lot, filling it with a vast number of sets, hiring and firing your actors, directors, crew and studio staff, then putting them to work on film after film, hoping to release blockbuster after blockbuster, ultimately with the twin aims of making shitloads of cash and reaping

armfuls of awards. Power, money and fame. It's the very fabric of life.

JUST SHOOT ME

There are three methods for making films. The simplest is to set a team of one to five screenwriters at work on the genre of your choice, wait for them to craft a generic (yet often surreally funny) era-specific script, then



We only get one take

Expansion packs we'd like to see: **NO.2 - STUNT ISLAND**



Any gamer worth his or her salt will be fully aware that *The Movies* isn't the first PC game ever to let you film scenes of cinematic greatness and splice them together in an in-game editing suite to create movie masterpieces. That honour belongs to one *Stunt Island*, the 3D vehicle sim version of *The Movies* from the late '90s (minus all the god game aspects seen here).

Stunt Island was brilliant, an overlooked legend of gaming genius. On a base level you were a jobbing stuntman flying bi-planes through barn doors, driving cars over ramps or parachuting onto moving trains and so on as you built up a career to rival Lee Majors.

The twist was that it all took place on a vast movie-making island, packed with sets and giving you the added option to just freestyle things. Pick a location, choose a vehicle, place your cameras and perform any stunt you could imagine. Then spend hours editing the shots, scenes and sound effects together to create your mini adventures.

Stunts are the real missing link from Lionhead's otherwise superb title, and if the developer has any sense it would seek out the rights to the old Infogrames title (come on Atari, be a sport) and update it post haste. Or just copy it for half the cost.



Stars are the key to success, yet all have habits that need tending to

cast your stars and director, hire your crew and send them off to film it. You can watch as they go through each scene, or go back to running the studio. Then, once shooting is complete, you release the flick and wait for the reviews and money to pour in.

The challenges here are many. First, to make sure you choose genres that will appeal to the audience of the time ('real world' news stories flick by at the top of the screen or on the radio to give you hints as to the kinds of pictures the public are queuing to watch). Second, to make sure you choose the right mix of cast and crew – some are more suited to certain genres or have plentiful personal problems that need dealing with. And third, to keep the environment they work within in tip-top condition.

CROCTOPUS:
behind the scenes.

The second method for making a film is to get rather more hands-on with the production stage. You're still faced with the same managerial problems as before, but instead of just letting the crew get on with it, you can access each scene as it's being shot and influence the performance via a set of scene-specific sliders. Change a leading character's walk across a graveyard from nervous to sexy if you think it will work better for the overall scene.

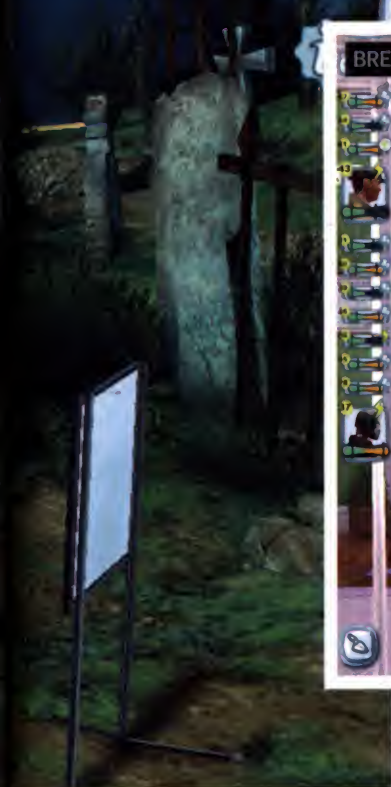
It's slightly more involving and gives you a certain sense of control over the proceedings, but in essence it's just a taster for *The Movies*' main course – the advanced movie-making tools.

AND... ACTION!

Build a custom scriptwriting office and you're basically given free reign to create anything your imagination can conjure up. Scenes are chosen from a huge store of options, from simple establishing shots, to intricate conversations between characters, to action-packed fight scenes.

The magic comes in the order you place them, the flexibility to customise each scene





by adding actors, props, backdrops, extras and the aforementioned action sliders to further personalise the performances.

Add to that the post-production options for editing scenes, adding sound effects and even recording your own dialogue and having the actors lip-synch to your words. Lionhead is keen to stress that the movie-making tools are more than just a simple sub-game within the larger managerial sim, but instead are pretty much the very core of *The Movies*, with the rest of the game playing second fiddle instead.

Thing is, it's right. The tools are incredibly complex and full of subtle touches. You may be working with stock scenes, but they're so varied, so many and the tools so flexible that you'll barely notice.

WHAT'S MY MOTIVATION?

With all the fun of film-making, it's easy to forget that there's actually a very well crafted god/management game surrounding things here too. Mixing elements of *Black & White* (either first or second, take your pick), *The Sims* and any *Tycoon* game in the past

century (except *Golf Resort Tycoon* – that gave shit a bad name), then ladling giant spoonfuls of the old Lionhead attention to detail over everything, *The Movies* ends up being far, far more than the sum of its parts.

Stars are the key to success, yet all have individual personalities that need tending to, lest you end up with raging alcoholics, morbidly obese food addicts, tantrums on every corner and rival studios nosing around waving their chequebooks.

To help, you're given rehab facilities, makeover depts and cosmetic surgery offices, plus you can hire personal assistants or manipulate the paparazzi to capture their off-moments and spread your stars' fame.

Or you can put them to work. There's something immensely satisfying about going to all the effort of scripting your film, laying



out the scenes, the sets, the costumes and the actors, honing the performances right down to the most intricate of details, then turning it over to your little computer people and actually watching them go through the process of shooting each scene.

CALLING PAUL ROSS

Then there's the online game. Well, I say game. It's more of a film-making community, where budding moguls get to upload their cinematic output for judgement by other players. The system rewards effort, with online credits being awarded for each film released, credits used to purchase exclusive sets, props, costumes and other in-game items. You're also ranked against your rivals, with regular festival competitions offering extra rewards to keep things spicy. Users can post reviews, comments, suggestions, the lot.

Usually, when a game attempts to create a community around it, the insular gaming crowd usually shrugs its pallid shoulders and just disappears back into its hole, letting only the dedicated mod-makers bother to make an effort. But the atmosphere around *The Movies* is such that it encourages interaction. The films themselves are so simple to distribute (ironically at odds with the real world) that

The Zonedance Festival

Where the spirit of Ed Wood lives on



Naturally it's going to be hard to top the likes of our witty debut picture *Shenannysgoats*, but that shouldn't stop you trying. In fact, we want you to put on your directing cap and give it a go. We're putting out a call to all budding Scorseses, Spielbergs and, to a lesser extent, Schumachers. We want films. Loads of them.

Over the coming months, we at *ZONE* are hoping to put together our own version of Cannes or Sundance (or even the bi-annual Scunthorpe Film Festival – we're not fussy), featuring your creations. Any genre, any length, although bear in mind we've got the attention spans of eight-year-olds around here. We'll put your efforts in front of a top panel of judges (ie Prez, Will and the office cleaner if he's about) and award prizes for the best, as well as pop them on our cover DVD for the world to see. Only one entry per director mind, and watch the language if you decide to include dubbing or subtitles. We're a family mag after all, even if it does resemble the Manson family sometimes.

Once you've wrapped the shooting, finished with pre-production and touched up the leading actress, send your films via email to movies@pczone.co.uk (or on a disc to 'Movies, PC ZONE, Future, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP'), including your name, address and contact details. We'll announce the full details (including prizes) in an upcoming issue, but that doesn't mean you can't get started right away. Action! Or, indeed, romance!



Our Feature Presentations

SPONSORED BY KEMAL'S TANDOORI GRILL, JUST FIVE MINUTES FROM THIS MAGAZINE

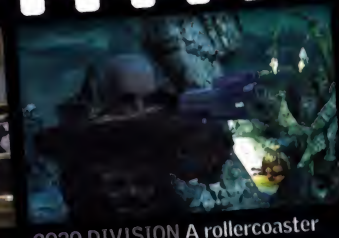
Ever since *The Movies* turned up at the ZONE office-cum-soundset, various members of staff have been hard at it creating celluloid masterpiece after celluloid masterpiece. Look out for these gems online soon...



SHENANNYGOATS The kind of motion picture that will stay with you long after the closing credits...



LADY, PLEASE LEAVE THE WAR A heart-rending tale of true love and chicken noises, set in WWII.



2020 DIVISION A rollercoaster ride of action, sci-fi, alien armies, kill-o-zap guns and gritty unrealism.



ROGER ROCKET-SHOES Subtle subtexts and pratfall. A film of vision, albeit bl...



"ILLOGICAL, captain..."



you actually get a sense of nervous anticipation when you upload something – much, I would expect, in the same way as Peter Jackson did once the final reels of *The Lord Of The Rings* were sent off. It's done. Shooting is over. Post-production and editing is finished. There's nothing more you can do to it. Your blood, sweat and tears are out there now, being watched, judged and, hopefully applauded by the general public. Waiting for the first reviews to arrive in *The Movies* is as much a trial on the ticker as it is in the theatre (I've experienced both and know whereof I speak). Not bad for a computer game.

I really can't praise *The Movies* highly enough. There's precious little to fault here – maybe there could be a touch more interaction within each scene, maybe the editing tools could offer a touch more freedom in terms of cutting and splicing: maybe, maybe, maybe...

However, it's all just minor and generally undeserved nit-picking at a game that's lived up to all of its promise, provided the ZONE office with more hours of sustained hilarity and entertainment than anything else released this year, and is quite simply unmissable if you're even remotely interested in PC gaming.

The Movies, not only our game of the month, quite possibly our game of the year. It really is every bit as good as we could have hoped for and every bit as good as the hype would have suggested. Time to grant Molyneux a peerage, ma'am. **PCZ**



THE boys in R&D work on new props.

ONLY joking, sir. Bow, scrape...

PCZONE

Graphics Typically great Lionhead visuals, especially the animation
Sound Era-specific music, plus brilliant movie effects
Multiplayer Online community and global movie rankings

- ✓ Genius concept
- ✓ Movie-making is the most fun you'll have on your PC
- ✓ Management game is superb too
- ✓ Typically high Lionhead values
- ✓ It's all up their on the screen
- ✗ Needs slightly more comprehensive editing tools

95

Oscar-worthy

Take Angelina **Jolie** anywhere you like!



movies on the move **FOX** **PSP**



OUT NOW



OUT 7th NOV



OUT 7th NOV



OUT 7th NOV



OUT 7th NOV



OUT 25th NOV



amazon.co.uk
and you're done.™

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WOW look, it's Jackie Chan!



WEAPONS include an angry dog on a leash.



SELF defence: not just for ladies.



NINJAS make crap keepers.



"PUSH pineapple shake a tree..."

RAG DOLL KUNG FU

Everybody was kung fu fighting, even *Steve Hogarty*



DEVELOPER Mark Healey
PUBLISHER Valve
WEBSITE
www.ragdollkungfu.com
ETA Out now
PRICE \$12.95



AT A GLANCE...

Ragdolls and kung fu combine to form a bizarrely-controlled fighting game using nothing but your humble mouse.

System requirements

HOW IT STACKS

WATCHING SHAOLIN SOCCER	83%
RAG DOLL KUNG FU	76%
REAL KUNG FU LESSONS	62%

IF YOU'VE BEEN living under a rock, or have one of those social life things we keep hearing about, then you probably have no idea what *Rag Doll Kung Fu* is, and the screenshots here both confuse and arouse you.

Well, let's break it down into its component parts: you have ragdolls (little puppets on strings) and kung fu (the ancient Chinese martial art now practised exclusively by 12-year-olds and weird people with too much spare-time). Put them together and you get a wacky beat 'em up in which you control every tiny movement of your character using just your mouse, be it a magnificent flying kick through the air, a powerful swing of your nunchucks or just a simple step forward.

FAST AS LIGHTNING

Moving your fighter by grabbing individual limbs and placing them where you want them to be might not seem like the most intuitive control mechanism – indeed, for the first half hour or so you'll be fumbling like a geriatric with a coin purse. However, given time and patience your skills will steadily develop until you can manoeuvre your character with ninja-like dexterity and precision. You'll need all the skill you can muster too, with later levels pitting



MIMICKING ninjas abound.

you against multiple foes, throwing in weapons and special powers, all of which are utilised with just your mouse. Still, as long as you've got a decent one (with lasers and red lights), you should be fine.

Unfortunately, as a game concept it's naturally short-lived. You'll complete the main training in a matter of hours (if not less), before moving on to the hitherto unavailable mini-games – which even then will only keep your attention for a short while. The multiplayer mode adds some long-term appeal, but while it lasts *Rag Doll Kung Fu* is an enjoyable and unbelievably funny game, featuring hilarious low-budget FMV starring developer Mark Healey and containing dialogue such as, "Get in that tree!" and "Idiots! Bring me his pubes!" If only for that alone, *Rag Doll Kung Fu* is well worth its humble asking price. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Beautifully stylised
Sound Hilarious faux-orientalisms
Multiplayer Online and off around one PC

- ✓ Genuinely funny
- ✓ Innovative control
- ✓ Original
- ✓ Cheap
- ✗ Not much depth
- ✗ Short-lived

76
Little bit frightening



THE Northern Line will be delayed again.



KILL enough enemies and you turn into this thing.

THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND

Steve Hogarty is a shotgun-wielding mental patient, hypothetically speaking of course

DEVELOPER Surreal Software
PUBLISHER Midway
WEBSITE sufferingtiesthatbind.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £24.99



AT A GLANCE...

One man versus legions of demented incarnations of mankind's worst defects, armed with guns and blunt objects. Lots of blood.

System requirements

2

HOW IT STACKS

THE SUFFERING: 84%

THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND: 75%

MANHUNT: 74%



LET'S all go to the lobby...

THERE ARE TWO things in this world that truly terrify me: the Judderman from that Metz advert a few years back and global warming. That said, I can sleep soundly knowing they're both fabrications of a despotic government, designed to keep the masses under control through fear and alcopops. So instead, I spend my time being frightened of *Ties That Bind*, sequel to that great game that you probably didn't buy – *The Suffering*.

Ties That Bind picks up where the first left off, seeing you back behind bars and relatively happy considering you're no longer being hounded by flesh-devouring demons. Naturally, that doesn't last long and you're soon launched back into the perverse and blood-splattered gameplay

that made the original so exhilarating. Not exhilarating like riding a rollercoaster, but exhilarating like watching *Evil Dead* or *Event Horizon* – the sort of paranoia-inducing gore that makes you squeal and throw cushions at the television.

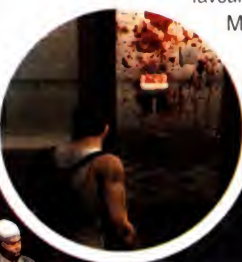
SAME OLD, SAME OLD

So, what's changed? Not a whole lot – everything that made the first game great is here. There are new malefactors such as the Triggerman (a half-man, half-spider, half-lots-of-guns thing) and the Arsonist (a weird thing on fire, a bit like the imps from *Doom*), as well as some old

favourites such as Burrowers and Marksmen. Old problems with jumping and climbing have been ironed out, but the first-person mode is still largely useless – not that it

infringes much on the essential aspects of the game, the third-person fighting, the disturbing atmosphere and the over-the-top gore. Imagine the foreboding dream sequences of *Max Payne*, coupled with the hellish creatures of *Doom* and you'll get a fair idea of the pervading atmosphere.

Ultimately however, it falls into the same trap that snagged the original, becoming irritatingly repetitive at times. Excellently scripted set-pieces and dialogue perforate a seemingly endless store of enemies, the surroundings soon become all too familiar and the console-restricted engine disappoints graphically. Which is a shame, because with a bit more technological freedom, developer Surreal could really shine. **PCZ**



DAMN, nothing gets out red wine.

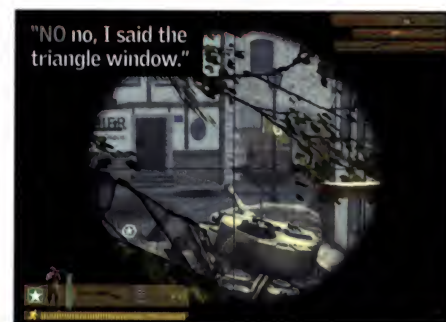
PCZONE

Graphics Suffers from consolitis
Sound Squelchy and gory
Multiplayer Nope

- ✓ Quite scary at times
- ✓ Decent story and characters
- ✓ Dual shotguns!
- ✗ Does nothing drastically new
- ✗ Repetitive

75

Blood, guts and scares aplenty



DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE

Steve Hogarty grabs a rifle and battles against Germans and fancy lighting



DEVELOPER Valve
PUBLISHER Valve
WEBSITE
www.dayofdefeat.com
ETA Out Now
PRICE \$19.95



AT A GLANCE...

Half-Life's popular World War II mod gets a complete reworking at the hands of Valve and its trusty Source engine.

System requirements **3**

HOW IT STACKS

BATTLEFIELD 2 94%

DAY OF DEFEAT 84%

DOD: SOURCE 79%

O H VIDEOGAME INDUSTRY, you are so illusively vain, grabbing our old favourites and pumping them full of virtual botox and digital silicone until they shimmer and shine like the sticky mucous-membrane enveloping a newborn calf. What was once an ugly WWII mod for *Half-Life* has gone under the knife and under the hammer, and after peeling away the bloodied bandages of a lengthy surgery, the beautiful new face and modest price tag of *Day Of Defeat: Source* has finally been revealed.

And what a pretty face it is too: the Source engine's slick presentation and solid feel seeps from every brick, sandbag and disassembled church. Valve's much-touted HDR lighting effects are out in force too, and while in theory HDR makes for a far more realistic depiction of the effect light has on our pupils and how the inner workings of our retinas coagulate in turn with global warming (or something), in practice it's really just a subtly attractive effect which more than anything looks like a cloud passing overhead on a sunny day.

The locales in which you fight the good fight consist of four maps from the original mod which read a bit like Santa's back row of sleigh-tuggers – Anzio, Avalanche, Donner and Flash. If you're a newcomer, you'll

quickly learn them by their descriptive names of Beach, Wrecked Town, Other Wrecked Town and Village, and if you're a veteran you'll quickly relearn your once-forgotten habits and tactics.

ALL LAID OUT

The maps are expertly crafted, channelling the two opposing forces into pre-determined flashpoints and allowing tense standoffs. Snipers are offered vantage points, creating

no-man's-lands and forcing do-or-die dashes across vacant town squares. Support classes offer covering fire, allowing other soldiers opportunities to manoeuvre into position, while machine-gunners can set up gun emplacements in broken window frames or sandbag barriers, delivering a powerful (yet easily flanked) offensive force capable of suppressing an advancing enemy.

Each class may only differ in its weapon loadout, but it's the type of weapon in your





hand that truly affects the role you play in your team. Indeed, depending on which class you choose, the game swings wildly between different playing styles: snipers must depend on assistance in order to hold and maintain the best sniping spots; support troops will spend a lot of time covering the infantry, who must push forward and generally sacrifice themselves for the good of the team; and the guys with the rockets... Well, they clear rooms. With explosions.

SEEN IT BEFORE

With semi-realistic weapon properties, such as not being able to fire a machine gun (well, not without a semblance of accuracy) without first deploying it; having to hoist a bazooka up to your shoulder before firing a rocket; the ability to pick up and throw live grenades back at the enemy; and of course the infamous M1 'can't reload in the middle of a clip' Garand, the game carries a modicum of authenticity. However, by still clinging to the small-scale skirmish atmosphere of the original, *Day Of Defeat: Source* doesn't make much of departure from the gameplay that made its predecessor arguably the best *Half-Life* mod since

Counter-Strike. What's more, with Valve planning to release additional maps from the original game at no extra charge, it's clear that the intention is simply to take the much-loved mod and give it a significant facelift before making us pay for it again.

BACK AGAIN

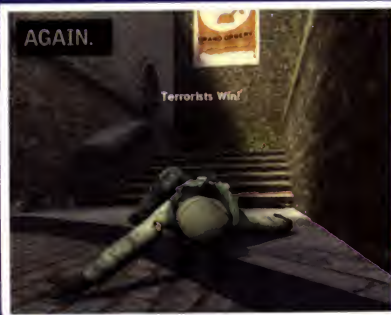
You see, that's the gripe with *Day Of Defeat: Source*: it's the same game we were playing only a few years ago, with graphical bells on. They say beauty is only skin deep, that it's the inside that counts, that money can't buy your love. They lie, though. Just like when the

original *Day Of Defeat* went on sale, it's hard to justify spending money on something that used to be free. Granted, this is only a fair criticism if you've played the game before. In addition though, in light of recent additions to the genre such as *Battlefield 2*, there's not much innovation here.

When all's said and done, this is an old game – an excellent old game and a beautiful old game – but an old game nonetheless. But if you haven't played it before, now's a great time to do so. **PC7**

Spot the difference

Taking a trip down memory lane



This isn't the first time Valve has delved into its back catalogue to bring a classic mod up-to-date. *Counter-Strike* received a similar treatment with the release of *Half-Life 2* (except it was, cough, free). The two mods were quite similar, as are their subsequent re-releases. Both feature close-quarter gunfights in closed environments and realistic damage, meaning you die over and over again in seemingly unfair ways. If you ever need to tell the difference in a hurry though, *Day Of Defeat* is a faster game and it's set in World War II.

PCZONE

Graphics Think *HL2* with bright lights
Sound All new and improved
Multiplayer Well... Obviously...

- ✓ Classic multiplayer gameplay
- ✓ Fantastic visuals
- ✓ Tense and atmospheric
- ✗ Didn't we play this before?
- ✗ Didn't this used to be free?
- ✗ Weren't there more maps?

79
Golden oldie



LIVING up to its name.



LOVE those stealthy elephants.

EVERQUEST II: DESERT OF FLAMES

Paul Presley feels the sand between his toes

DEVELOPER Sony Online Entertainment
PUBLISHER Ubisoft
WEBSITE www.everquest2.com
ETA Out Now
PRICE £24.99



AT A GLANCE...

An Arabian-themed expansion for *EverQuest II*, adding PvP arenas, climbable walls and more high-level content than ever before.

System requirements

4

HOW IT STACKS

EVERQUEST II 95%

WORLD OF WARCRAFT 95%

EQII: DESERT OF FLAMES 75%

Poor old Sony. Given the massive debacle that was the *Star Wars Galaxies Combat Upgrade*, you'd think that its developer – Sony Online Entertainment (SOE) – would steer clear of using that phrase ever again. Not so. With the release of the *Desert Of Flames* expansion for the underrated *EverQuest II* – a game easily as enjoyable as *WOW*, but with half the calories... Sorry, I mean players – came an all-singing, all-dancing, all-existing player-base-annoying 'combat upgrade'. SOE must be cursed.



"ARISE, Sir pole-back."



NO skirts in the desert.

Apart from inflaming the high-maintenance players, *Desert Of Flames* brings plenty of good stuff to the table. High-level content, a level cap increase to 60, all-new dungeons and instanced zones, as well as a new continent to explore.

Some of its more hyped additions – climbable walls, for instance – are less impressive, being limited to specific areas only and don't really add anything essential to the core gameplay mechanic.

Back with the pluses, the PvP arena combat brings some added excitement, in a similar vein to *WOW's Battlegrounds* expansion, but minus the horrendous waiting times to take part. Team deathmatches, capture the flag, one-on-one duelling and more are available, while the option to play either as yourself or as a trainable 'pet fighter' works a lot better than it sounds. Think a grown-up version of Pokémon and you're on the right track.

RESTRICTED CONTENT

All in all, this is a pretty good expansion pack with a strong storyline and structure, although it does feel as though SOE has missed a trick here. The whole continent feels rather small (compared to the mammoth size of the original *EverQuest's* expansions), and restricting content to level 50 and above (in terms of survivability – anyone can access *DOF*, but you'd be a fool to take a low leveller there) does nothing to

address issues with *EQII's* now tiresome low level game.

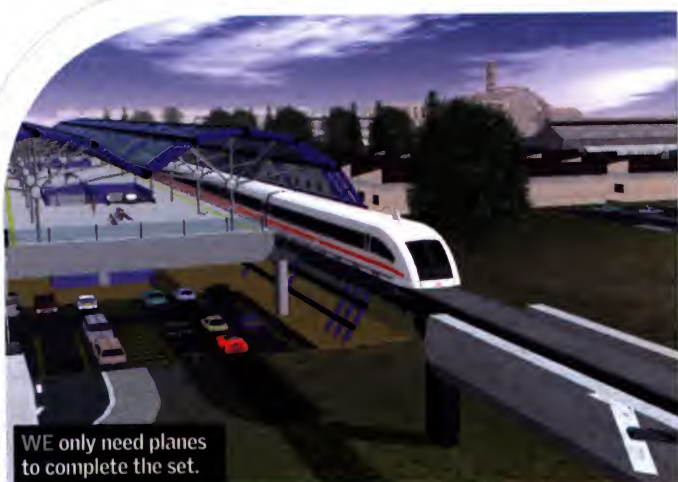
It might have been a better option to provide a range of level content, giving new characters another area to start their virtual lives and really giving the background story added weight in the overall *EverQuest II* world. Nonetheless, *Desert Of Flames* is a solid expansion pack, with enough novelty to appeal should you be tough enough. And don't mind getting sand in your shoes. **PC**



Graphics As good as *EQII* ever was
Sound Lacking voice-overs, but good spot effects
Multiplayer Well, duh

- ✓ Plenty of high level content
- ✓ PvP content works well
- ✓ Raises the level cap
- ✗ Could have been more wide reaching
- ✗ Combat upgrade has ruffled feathers
- ✗ Needs polish





WE only need planes to complete the set.

TRAINZ RAILWAY SIMULATOR 2006

Now boarding. Or is that 'boring'?

DEVELOPER Auran
PUBLISHER Just Trains
WEBSITE www.virtualtrainz.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

System requirements ②

NOT SO MUCH a train simulator as a train set simulator, *Trainz 2006* gives you as many engines, carriages and consists as you can handle, chucks scenery from around the world into the toy box and lets you drive around over 50 pre-existing routes. Or you can make your own, usually in the shape of your initials or a cock and balls. You know it's true.

Apart from the amount of content, things haven't moved on very much since the 2004 version. A few nips and tucks here and there, refined content controls, better tutorials and a slight expansion of the simulation 'rules' to make driving your choo-choos a touch harder, but otherwise it all looks much the same as before. Even graphically it hasn't really moved on, content to wallow in its own little corner of the gaming world.

Just because *Trainz* is aimed at a niche market, that doesn't excuse shoddy presentation and a lack of overall polish though. It may do exactly what it sets out to, and the existing community may well create webloads of extra content, tracks, trains, routes and scenery, but that doesn't mean it's any good. Just lacking in competition, that's all.

Once EA's attempt to plant a flag in another sector



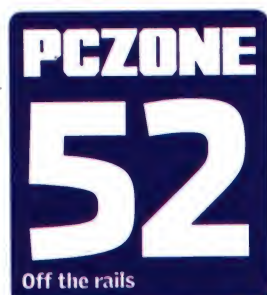
WHITE flash...



...DARK destroyer. Probably.

of gaming comes to fruition (with *Rail Simulator* – the extension of the brand once owned by Microsoft), bringing with it all the usual EA production values, half-hearted efforts like *Trainz* simply won't stand a chance. The railway children are about to grow up.

Paul Presley



THAT'S one giant monobrow.

BONE: OUT FROM BONEVILLE

New from the *Sam & Max* stable

DEVELOPER TellTale Games
PUBLISHER TellTale Games
WEBSITE www.telltalegames.com
ETA Out now
PRICE \$19.99

System requirements ①

BONE FEELS A lot like the Disney films of yore, in which mice would eat breadcrumbs at the start and sing "zipedy-do-dah"! It creates a warm feeling that doesn't provide belly-laughs, but at least fixes you up with a permanent half-grin.

Bone is a cutesy-pie adventure in which tasks are as vital as chopping wood, picking apples and playing hide and seek with small shrews: hardly edge-of-the-seat stuff. But the dialogue of Fone Bone (hero), Phoney Bone (brother and grumpy antagonist) and Smiley Bone (brother and itinerant songstrel) crackles with warmth and neat dialogue trees that expand the characters of the nubbino-nosed ones with great dexterity.

Thing is though, episodic as it may be, this is two hours of entertainment

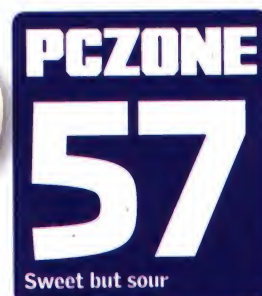


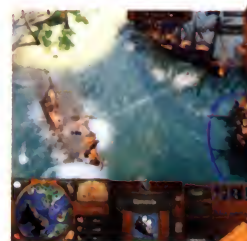
A bad case of tree-love.

being sold off for \$20 (£11) which, despite the fuzziness, is a total rip-off for two hours of play. What's more, punctuating all the stomping and the shrew-play are some of the worst attempts at mini-games ever: sub-Flash and sub-normal, the hardest thing about sections like the 'running from bees' game is attempting to not stab your own eyes out...

Is the irreverence of *Sam & Max* safe in the hands of TellTale? Yes, indubitably. Will the team have to pull their socks up? Well, maybe if they use that string over there on that winch and attach it to the lip of the sock and...

Will Porter





AGE OF EMPIRES III

Sam Kiildsen went to the New World and all he brought back was a lousy potato, some baccy – and this review...

DEVELOPER Ensemble Studios
PUBLISHER Microsoft
WEBSITE www.ageofempires3.com
ETA Out Now
PRICE £34.99



AT A GLANCE...

Conquer the Americas the *Age Of Empires* way – by collecting resources and using them to 'build' soldiers! Now with added ragdoll physics and shiny water...

System requirements

4

HOW IT STACKS

CIVILIZATION IV 92%

AGE OF EMPIRES III 84%

WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR 81%

AGE OF EMPIRES III is a triple-A RTS, that exudes quality and polish. It's what happens when some of the finest minds that defined the genre decide they're going to spend a few years doing what they do best. If you've played any of Ensemble Studios' previous titles, then you'll be on familiar ground here. There are settlements to be built, resources collected, armies recruited and enemies to be defeated.

This time around we're in the New World, with players assuming the roles of conquistadors, colonists and explorers, scouring unspoiled lands for wealth and power. Well in the skirmish mode, at least. The mood of the single-player campaign is a little more altruistic, spanning a few hundred years and putting you in the shoes (or fetching suede moccasins, at one point) of three members of a family as they move around the Americas, striving to keep the secret of eternal life out of the hands of a wicked secret society.

Thankfully, the setting isn't the only thing that's new. As you'll no doubt have guessed, this game has lots of Native Americans. If it were a historical simulation, you'd probably be selling these poor folks diseased blankets, turfing

them out of their homes and calling it 'manifest destiny', but Ensemble has wisely chosen to sidestep most of this unpleasantness, allowing you to ally yourself with the tribes instead. Construct a trading post by a native settlement and you can recruit their soldiers and medicine men.

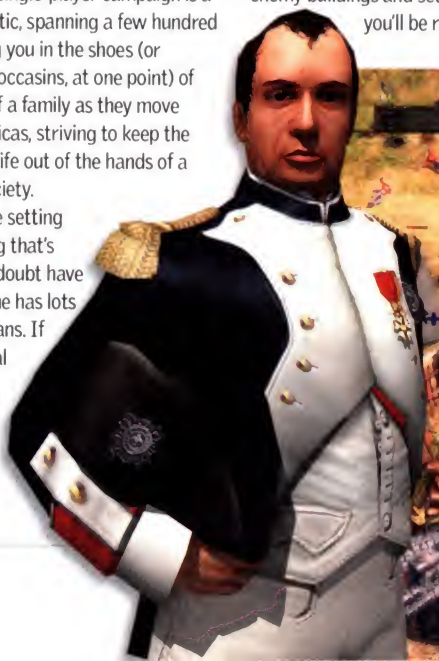
RESOURCEY

With the addition of the 'home city' and its upgradeable card system (see 'Decks And The City!', opposite), you can now have shipments of supplies (the main resources are wood, food and money), troops or other goodies sent to your new colony.

When you kill hostile units, destroy enemy buildings and set up trade routes, you'll be rewarded with

experience points. Once your experience level has filled up a meter, you'll be eligible for a shipment. Keep filling it up and you'll be receiving more freebies than the PC ZONE office. It's a well thought out system, adding something a little different to what is otherwise a straightforward RTS.

The combat mechanics, unfortunately, are pretty much what we've come to expect from the genre. There's a scissors-paper-stones style hierarchy with the units – pikemen beat cavalry, cavalry beat ranged infantry, while light infantry beat pikemen – so there aren't many times when you find yourself thinking about battle tactics and strategy. The game instead



IT'S like the Alamo again. Eat cannon, Mexican dogs!

JOHNNY fitted in well with his new neighbours.

IV: Industrial Age

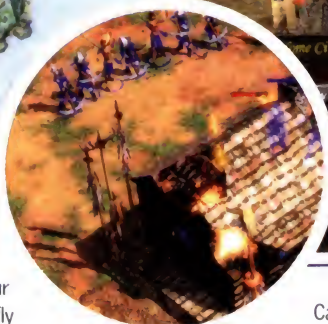


Great line decorated dwelling appears to Wood.

pressures you toward recruiting more units, or simply more powerful ones than the enemy in order to win. Click on the baddies, sit back and wait. It's more *Sun* reader than Sun Tzu.

It's simplistic and we were honestly expecting more this time round. Still, it's slightly more fun than beating Jamie Sefton

helping of excellent sound design and you've got one tasty treat on your plate. Smoke and sparks fly as cannonballs skip over the ground. When they smash into buildings or ships the effects are really convincing. Shards of wood spin through the air, dust



It's deceptively easy to get into and maddeningly addictive once you start

at *Pro Evolution Soccer 5* on your first go (quite the feat as it happens). And why? It's all about the presentation.

LET'S GET PHYSICAL

A good physics engine plus cannons is a recipe for sheer coolness. Add a generous

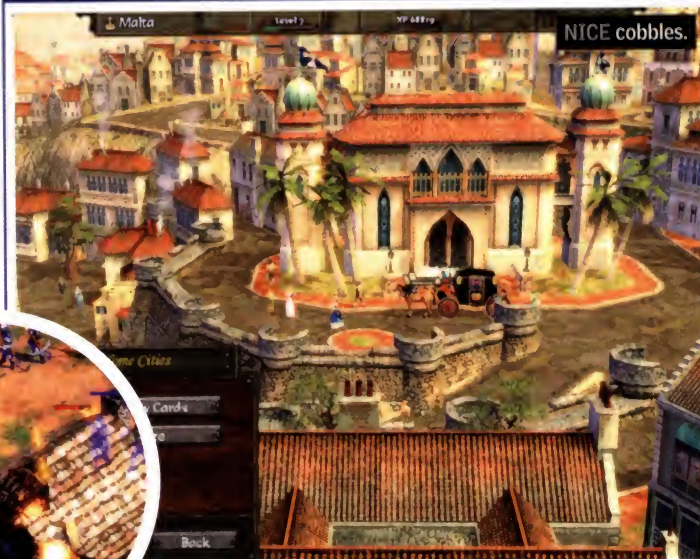
clouds billow out and masonry crumbles. It doesn't take a genius to work out what happens when the artillery is turned on your enemy's infantry. Let's just say that you'll soon grow accustomed to watching unfortunate fellows cartwheeling around the beautifully realised levels.

THE British: sneering and stuck up.



Decks and the city

Home is where the card is...



Call it style over substance if you will, but it works for us. The game's real substance lies in the mechanic of building up and improving your colony, exploring the map, recruiting an army and so on. It's deceptively easy to get into and maddeningly addictive once you start.

Simple on the surface, but satisfyingly complex underneath – that's the *Age Of Empires* series all over. This latest instalment is an evolution of the successful formula rather than the revolution that some of us might have been hoping for, but we can't really blame Ensemble Studios for that. After all, gamers have lapped up all the previous *Age* games with relish and that isn't about to change with this one. It's surely the best-looking traditional real time strategy game out there at the moment, and more importantly it's a real blast to play. Boom! 

One new feature is 'home city', a pretty 3D town that you can customise as you progress through the game. Fancy festooning your Town Hall with a little patriotic bunting? Knock yourself out.

The tiered card system also allows you to expand and upgrade your shipment options for the game, with cards being handed out depending on your performance during the previous level. The more cards you add to the city, the more choice you'll have and the better your shipments will be! Confused? Fear not – it's a lot simpler and more fun than it sounds.

PCZONE

Graphics Gloriously vivid and lush
Sound Top tunes and cannonades
Multiplayer Skirmishes aplenty

- ✓ Has that classic AOE feeling
- ✓ Sprinkling of innovation
- ✓ Gorgeous visuals
- ✓ Best cannons ever
- ✗ Combat remains messy
- ✗ Doesn't stray far from RTS traditions

84

New World, same game



IS that Craig Charles on the side?



SKY TV had an aggressive new policy for dealing with rival satellite companies.

X3: REUNION

In space, no-one can hear you scream. Which is just as well as *Paul Presley* is a big girl's blouse



DEVELOPER Egosoft
PUBLISHER Deep Silver
WEBSITE
www.x3reunion.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99



THERE WAS A scene in the popular science fiction television series *Babylon 5* in which the pilot of a small fighter craft flew his tiny spaceship along the hull of the fictional five-mile long space station, weaving in and out of the various turrets, towers and other spiky, sticky-outy bits, spinning around its z-axis while maintaining its forward momentum and generally having a hell of a time of it. It was the coolest thing ever and since that moment, I have been waiting for a space-based game to come along and let me recreate it.

Many have stepped up to the plate, promising huge ships and epic interstellar objects and all have failed to realise the dream, leaving me shattered and disillusioned like a once bright-eyed young games journalist having finally been broken after one industry shindig too many. *X2: The Threat* hinted at greatness, but much like two children standing on each other's heads, hidden inside a large comedy overcoat, the

reality proved to be less gigantic than one hoped. For a time, it seemed as though no game could save the day.

LIVE THE DREAM

Until now! Yes, leaving aside my clumsy multiple simile stacking, I have finally played out my Babylonian (5) fantasy within the realms of computer gamedom, thanks to the joyous beast that is *X3: Reunion*. The very moment I started my first game in my tiny little fighter I immediately spied to my left a gigantic, elongated, knobble-filled space station of somewhat epic proportions and, with the encouragement and goodwill of the onlookers who had gathered to witness the spectacle (indicating that my personal televisual-inspired dream was even more populist than I had imagined), I set attitude thrusters to maximum, pointed my nose

towards the station's rear end and commenced my run.

Reader, I tell you, it was every bit as good as I could have hoped. In and out I weaved, a fancy loop around a rotating gravitational strut here, a sideways thrust around a protruding gantry there, and on and on and on it went for what felt like an absolute age – thrilling, delighting and amazing as it went. The dream made flesh. Then, with joy virtually unconfined, I targeted the station, hit the docking computer and discovered they've ruined it.

NOT GOING IN

Well, perhaps 'ruined' is a bit strong. You see, other than the 'fly along the hull' dream, the *X* series (in the previous chapter) was responsible for fulfilling one of my other space-game desires – that of flying inside

AT A GLANCE...

Sedate space beauty that redefines visual excellence and plays like the closest thing to a modern-day *Elite* as you'll find anywhere outside of David Braben's private office.

System requirements **4**

HOW IT STACKS

X3: REUNION 92%

X2: THE THREAT (BUDGET) 91%

FREELANCER (BUDGET) 86%



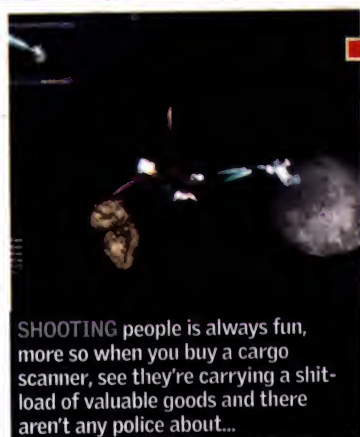
THAT'S pretty big.



WEREN'T you in *Battle Beyond The Stars*?

Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?

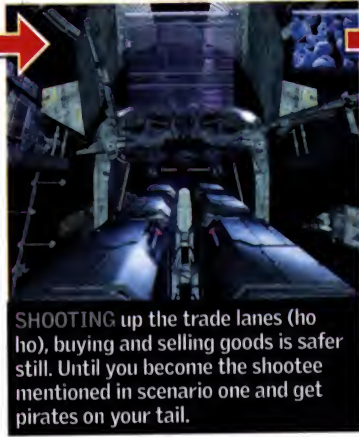
Four ways to make your fortune in the universe of X3



SHOOTING people is always fun, more so when you buy a cargo scanner, see they're carrying a shit-load of valuable goods and there aren't any police about...



SHOOTING large floating rocks is less fun, but at least they don't tend to shoot back. Except the really angry ones. You can then fill your boots with grit (ore) and sell it.



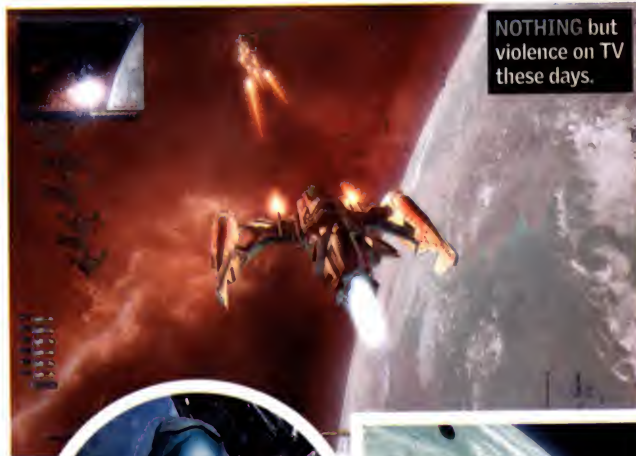
SHOOTING up the trade lanes (ho ho), buying and selling goods is safer still. Until you become the shootee mentioned in scenario one and get pirates on your tail.



SHOOTING a glance at a station's bulletin board shows people willing to pay for a taxi service. I 'ad that Carl Sagan in the back of me space shuttle the other day...



IT'LL never fit in there.



NOTHING but violence on TV these days.



A successful rear action.

the space stations. You'd fly alongside, request to land, guide your ship along the navigational lights towards the opening hanger door, then while most games would leave it there and bring up the station menus, X2 went that one step further and had you fly through the docking corridors and slowly nudge your ship into its parking bay. Then you'd get the menus (although you could also pop out of the cockpit in your spacesuit and fly around inspecting the

(barring one or two basic stations) is external, via extending docking clamps. Which makes sense from a practical programming point of view given the horrendous size and complexity of these new stations (they really are astoundingly impressive), modelling all the interiors as well would have been asking a bit much. Plus, external docking removes any spatial problems when flying in with the larger ships on offer, I guess.

quarter impulse or less only.

JUST LET IT GO...

So, personal predilections about docking aside, has Egosoft managed to pull off the unthinkable and produce a game that's actually *better* than X2: *The Threat*? Simple answer? In spades. Everything that has made the X series so superb has been recreated, then added to, then given the kind of extreme makeover that the likes of UK Living can only dream about.

For newcomers to our happy band of galactic wanderers, this means flying spaceships of all sizes through a massive universe, trading your way to fun and profit in a manner befitting the age-old classic *Elite*. Or shooting pirates for fun and profit. Or being a pirate for fun and profit. Or starting an intergalactic conglomerate for fun and profit – although that one will take a while as space stations are

It's been given the kind of extreme makeover UK Living can only dream of

other visitors if you liked, or even find the odd piece of stray cargo – a nice touch in a game chock full of them).

In X3, Egosoft has – for reasons that I understand, but cannot allow myself to support – done away with such internal activities. Instead, almost all docking

In fact, there's nothing actually wrong with the new docking other than my own personal predilections for recreating that *Star Trek III* moment of flying in and out of great big space doors at half impulse, when the Starfleet manual clearly states that all docking manoeuvres should be done at



A bit bigger.

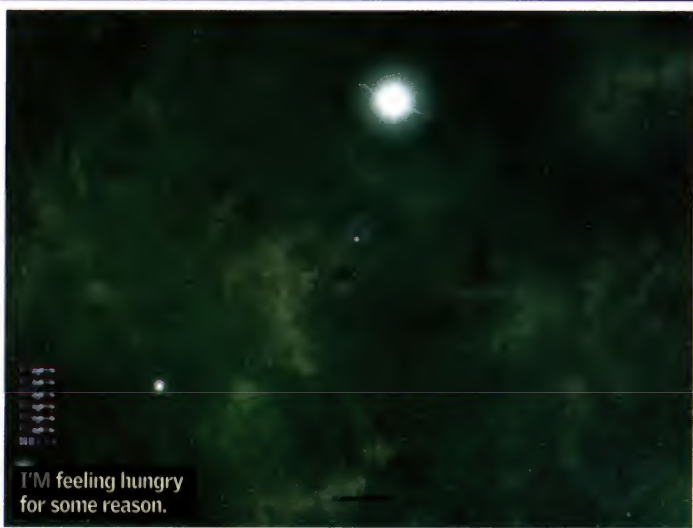


TAKING space coals to New Newcastle.



The Chill-Out Zone

"Man, why don't you dig how beautiful it is out there?"



I'M feeling hungry for some reason.

One of *X2*'s big pluses was that you could just light up a roll of *Columbian Black*, flick on the autopilot, and get spaced in every sense – such was its sedate pacing, swirling colour-filled nebulae and laid-back tunes. *X3* is no less beautiful to behold, but with a slightly more restrained colour palette, meaning space hippies will have to get their fix elsewhere. Always with those negative waves, man.

QUITE big.



RIGHT in the eye.



GOOD for scooping up stray balloons.

HI HO, hi ho, it's off to space we go.

expensive beasts and require a vast investment of time, money and resources. But you can do it, that's the thing. You've got this universe here, you see, and just about nothing is off limits.

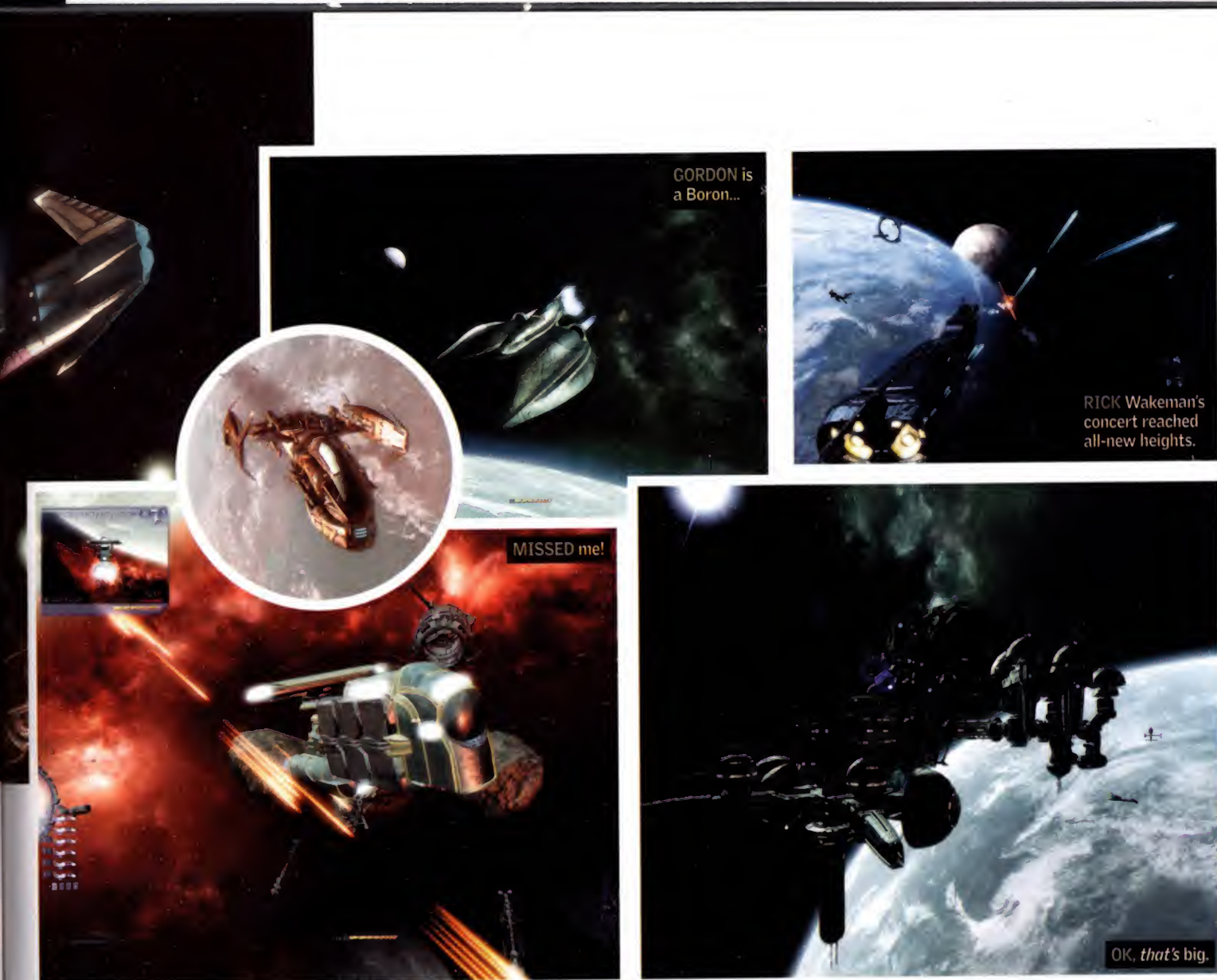
PIGS IN SPACE

And then there's the story. The much hyped, much profiled story. Written by a proper writer and that. The original *X* told of an Earth pilot being zapped across the universe due to a faulty 'jumpdrive', only to discover aliens, high adventure and no real way home again. A bit like *Farscape*, for TV sci-fi fans. The sequel told of the pilot's son discovering his roots, searching for his now missing father while fending off a

growing alien menace to the universe and the discovery that Earth colonists provided the seed for the major alien race's history in the first place.

X3 continues the son's tale, picking up at the end of the alien war and with a new threat to contend with. Plus, with *X3* having the word 'reunion' in the title, you can possibly guess where the tale will go, although I will say it works as a name on many levels.

Is it any good, though? Actually, yes, it is. *X2*'s biggest problem was its story – Egosoft handled the job itself and, frankly, made a pig's ear of it. By admitting this and drafting in help (from an ex-*Emmerdale* writer, believe it or not – wonder if Sefton knows him), *X3* has been made a richer place. As before, you'll find enough freedom to dip in and out of the story at will, meaning you can spend as much time exploring, trading,



Combat is much quicker, but without drifting into stupid arcade territory

fighting and upgrading your status as you want, without disrupting the flow of the backstory. Then, when you do dip in, there's enough structure and pacing to it to give all your other actions meaning. I should also declare an interest – I've provided one or two of the voiceovers for the game and while it hasn't influenced my opinion one whit, I will say that X3 has some of the best vocal acting ever heard in a game. Ahem.

DRONING ON

The other side of X2 that most people thought was lacking was combat. As much as the game wanted to give you freedom to do what you wanted, combat was cumbersome, hard to get to grips with and

in the main, best avoided (or left to the autopilots). Like a precocious child genius ransacking your box of messed-up Rubik's Cubes and half-finished Sudoku, Egosoft has solved that problem before your very eyes without you ever quite being able to put your finger on how.

Fighting feels quicker, more accessible, more dynamic and more controllable than

ever before. Death feels more like a result of your own carelessness rather than the game mechanics' inability to cope with the demands placed on it. It feels significantly different when controlling nippy little fighters to piloting huge destroyers, bristling with turrets, missiles and drones, all automated, all able to be issued with individual commands, all able to be manually controlled if you wish.

It still isn't quite up to *Freelancer's* levels of speedy, action space combat, but it isn't really trying to be. X3 is all about creating as realistic an experience as possible within the limitations of its internal logic and as such, combat still requires a lot of skill to master fully. But it is much improved without

drifting into stupid arcade territory, and the game is all the better for it.

FIRST STAR ON THE LEFT

X3 has fixed what few problems X2 had, and by fixed I mean rewritten from scratch rather than patched up. Then it's had its fundamental mechanics recrafted without betraying the very core values that made it the success it was. Then it's been plastered in fancy make-up and dolled up in such finery as to make your eyes boggle. ("It looks better than most sci-fi films," said an editor of these parts, looking over my shoulder.)

X3: *Reunion* – one of the few games that has the power to engage your imagination with pretty pictures, then actually live up to your imaginings when you get your hands on it. Bring back the bloody internal docking next time and it'll probably be the first game in ZONE history to get 100 per cent. **PCZ**



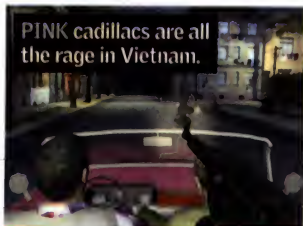
PCZONE

Graphics Them things is HUGE! Dribble...
Sound Mellow tunes and great voice-acting (mostly by me)
Multiplayer None, but by god! We want 'X - Online' more than ever now!

- ✓ Does the free universe/*Elite* thing better than anything else
- ✓ As beautiful as Miss World holding a steak and kidney pie (mmm)
- ✓ Much better story than X2
- ✓ Combat is much, much improved all-round
- ✗ Can be too slow-paced for the joystick junkie crowd (their loss)
- ✗ Docking has taken a sad step backwards

92

Stellar



PINK cadillacs are all the rage in Vietnam.



THIS was no time to play sleeping lions.



THOSE gloves are going to leave red marks.

THE horrors of war.



VIETCONG 2

Welcome to the jungle, *Steve Hogarty's* got fun and games

DEVELOPER Pterodon
PUBLISHER 2K Games
WEBSITE
www.pterodon.com
ETA Out Now
PRICE £29.99

AT A GLANCE...

Take a trip to 'Nam and experience some more jungle warfare, except in the city this time around. Includes a prostitute.

System requirements

3

HOW IT STACKS

VIETCONG 81%

VIETCONG: FIST ALPHA 70%

VIETCONG 2 48%



THIS week on *Lost*, Jack encounters VC troops.



COMING in a bit low aren't you?

THEY NEVER COULD get green right, those guys at Pterodon. There was just something about the flora in *Vietcong* which gave the impression of wandering around a garden centre in Shropshire looking for a new fuchsia, rather than clinging to survival in the stifling, damp heat of the Vietnamese jungle. That's probably the reason the sequel is set mainly in good old urban environments.

However, quite why the team has decided to crowbar in some squad-based action is a bit less obvious – perhaps they saw how well *Brothers In Arms* did it, or perhaps they're fans of *Full Spectrum Warrior*. One thing's for sure though: it doesn't do squads as well as either of the games it unashamedly rips off – or 'pays tribute to' if you want to be nice about it.

Where should I start then? Perhaps I should mention that the graphics only look marginally better than the first game (which looked pretty ugly when it was released anyway). Or maybe I should berate lazy design

ideas, which include the age-old concepts of 'death-from-falling-a-metre-or-two' and 'getting-automatically-shot-for-going-the-wrong-way'? Or should I start by pointing out the enemy's laughable AI, whose ideas of tactics are those little mints in a box? Maybe I could denounce the weightless and flimsy feel to the engine, the weak and insubstantial feel to the weapons, the fact that you care as much for your comrades as you do for some snot in your McChicken sandwich? Or perhaps I should just mock the cringe-worthy voice-acting and corny, stereotyped dialogue?

GET ON WITH IT THEN

Well, after that torrent of negativity, maybe it's only fair I start (or end, damn page size restrictions) with something pleasant. *Vietcong 2* does have some nice set-pieces and intense stand-offs between the US and VC, and Pterodon has even included a VC campaign this time around, dispelling previous accusations of being slightly prejudiced towards the yanks' portrayal of the war. This game, had it been released two years ago would've been a lot easier to swallow. However,

considering just how much the FPS genre has progressed, specifically the squad-commanding, war-themed FPS sub-genre, it's really not worth your time unless you're particularly fanatical about the original. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Below average
Sound As meaty as Calista Flockhart
Multiplayer Yep, all modes of the rainbow

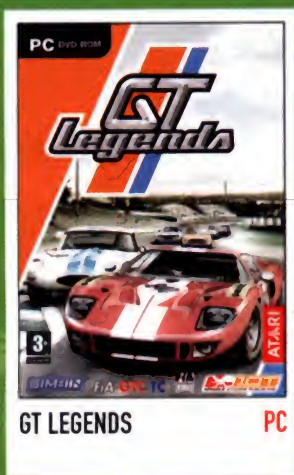
- ✓ Nice '60s rock music
- ✓ Occasionally involving
- ✗ Terrible AI
- ✗ Yesterday's graphics
- ✗ Silly design flaws
- ✗ Generally feels old

48

Bit of a booby trap



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MEGASTORES OTHER STORES

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FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006

Tactics board at the ready, *Steve Hill* has another go at imitating the Special One

DEVELOPER Sports Interactive
PUBLISHER Sega
WEBSITE
www.siges.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99



AT A GLANCE...

The second incarnation of *Football Manager* is of course the umpteenth version of the game formerly known as *Championship Manager*.

System requirements

2

HOW IT STACKS

FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006 90%

FIFA MANAGER 06 70%

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 5 50%

SO I'M AT the big Barnet vs Chester League Two clash. It's the usual routine: a few hurried ales before getting into the ground at 2.55pm, nodding to a couple of faces and taking my seat. Looking up, I notice that Barnet's keeper is called Flitney (it's written on his shirt), which seems somehow familiar. Remembering where I know him from, I unthinkingly announce to my mate that I signed him on loan a few seasons ago. Looking up from his programme, he simply stares at me blankly. "In *Football Manager*," I clarify. "It's not real," he correctly surmises, before returning to his overpriced pamphlet.

Of course it's not real. We know it's not real. But such is the resemblance to real football that it sometimes can't help but spill over. The sign of a genuine *Football Manager* addict is when they start banging on about their team as if it's real, and indeed as if anyone cares. It's a trait that I used to mock former *ZONE* editor Jeremy Wells for demonstrating, as he endlessly droned on about his Arsenal formation. Of course, this was before I'd become addicted and started boring people myself.

Guess what? Nobody cares. It's the equivalent of starting to tell someone about a really weird dream you had involving your

headmaster and a goldfish – save yourself, they've already stopped listening. Yet still the game continues to absorb more addicts.

I was on a press trip recently with the usual bunch of slackers, quaffing foreign beers late into the night. The majority of conversational gambits had been exhausted – even politics – when it eventually got onto games. One wild-eyed PlayStation hack then confessed how he sneaks out of bed – like some secret lemonade drinker (one for fans of '80s adverts there) – leaving his girlfriend

slumbering, to get his newly acquired fix of *Football Manager*. And of course he made the mistake of telling us how he'd signed Dudek and blah-blah-blah... Cue glazed eyes, yawns and a rapid scattering towards bed.

RETURN OF THE SMACK

The good/bad news is that *Football Manager* is back, and is – as if you hadn't guessed – as chronically addictive as ever. It's not a problem for me. I can handle it. As *EastEnders*' 'Nasty' Nick Cotton used to plea





PLAYER stats have been revamped.

FOOTBALL is all about scoring goals.

What's Your Favourite Position?

Flexibility is always an asset



ON the 'ead, Tom.

As a manager, you'll often be forced to play players out of position, particularly if you have a small squad that's ravaged by injuries and suspensions. Thus far in *Football Manager/Championship Manager*, this has largely been a case of guesswork, throwing a player in and seeing how he gets on. In *FM2006*, a player's preferred positions are visually represented along with a description, ranging from 'natural' to 'accomplished' to 'awkward'. So, if you were wondering why your left-back was struggling to score 20 goals a season up front, now you know why.



DECIDE on appropriate medical treatment.

to his mum, Dot, when she locked him in the spare room to get him off the smack: "I'm better, Ma."

Yeah, I'll have the odd dabble, but I've moved on. It's a beautiful world out there, not to be wasted sat in an airless room pondering over formations

of the country watching us routinely twat several goals past the opposition.

But, just in theory, if I were sucked into the occasional six-hour session of *FM2006*, I may have been mightily impressed. I might

icon alerting you to their discomfort.

Or there's the fact that the new snapshot page gives you all the info you need at a glance rather than having to flick through pages looking for finances, fixtures and so on. There's even the option to view player info in easy-to-read bar charts instead of numerically.

Even if I'd never played the game before and found the prospect bewildering, I could have used the extensive in-game tutorial to get to grips with it. Or, as an experienced player, I could have noticed how the new features subtly present themselves over the course of several weeks, inexorably sucking you in to a parallel universe.

But I'm not interested. Chester have beaten Barnet 3-1 and I had the correct score with Ladbrokes at 22-1. Now that's what I call football. **PCZ**

Bouts of FM addiction tend to come when your real team is struggling

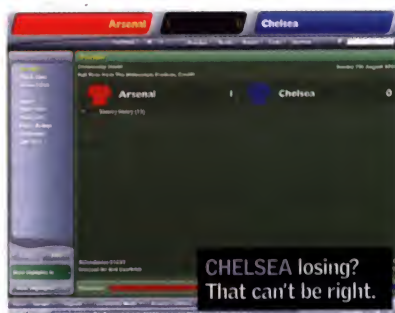
and tactics. Besides, with the mighty Chester currently riding high in League Two (in 'real life'), I've no need for a digital substitute.

Bouts of *Football Manager* addiction tend to come when your real team is struggling, causing you to attempt to see how you could do better. There's no way I could do better than current Chester incumbent, Keith Curle, and I get my football kicks from travelling the length and breadth

have enjoyed the new Quick Tactic feature, enabling you to make changes on-the-fly. I might also have attempted to change things at half-time with the right choice of team-talk. I could also have been intrigued by the new physio reports, whereby they present the information to you, and even ask if a player should be given an injection to get him through the game. The new match engine might have even proved useful, with injured players marked with an on-screen



HALF-TIME team-talks can make a difference.



CHELSEA losing? That can't be right.



EVERYTHING under one roof.

PCZONE

Graphics Dots and words. Er, functional?
Sound Rudimentary crowd noises
Multiplayer Online, network or alternating turns

- ✓ Streamlined interface
- ✓ Improved match engine
- ✓ Quicker
- ✓ Can play online poker simultaneously
- ✗ Full price
- ✗ Ruins life

90

What's another year?



CIVILIZATION IV

Stock up on tinned food and shotguns, hide under the table and start praying. The future of mankind is in *Will Porter's* hands

DEVELOPER Firaxis Games
PUBLISHER 2K Games
WEBSITE
www.2kgames.com/civ4
ETA Out now
PRICE £39.99



AT A GLANCE...

The grandpa of nation-builders gets back on stage to give young pretenders a sound thrashing. Welcome back Mr Meier.

System requirements 2

HOW IT STACKS

CIVILIZATION IV 92%

CIVILIZATION III 86%

AGE OF EMPIRES III 84%

HOW DO YOU improve *Civilization*? It's an icon – a bastion of PC gaming. Changing the rubric of Meier's opus would be like removing the Beauty Contest card in Monopoly, turning Professor Plum green, or reintroducing the controversial 1976 Double-Nip rule back into Mornington Crescent (third edition). In short, there'd be fighting in the streets.

Civ III played it safe, almost too safe, and now *Civ IV* becomes the prodigal son – reappearing on our doorsteps fresh, reformed, tweaked, tucked and with a few extra features moved slightly out of view under its well-toned arm. Oh, and it's a masterpiece. Did I mention that? A bona-fide classic that's politely informing *Age Of Empires III* that it's raining while pissing all over its shoes.

For those 14 years late to the party it falls to me to act as both pusher and pimp, so if established hacks could take a few steps back then I'll address the masses. *Civ* sees you direct the path of human society from club-wielding warrior through to the space age: you explore, found cities, research technology, trade, wage war and engage in all manner of nefarious diplomacy to ensure that your race (be they English, Roman or whatever) comes out on top, hits the stars



first, gets voted the head of the United Nations, or does one of several other notable achievements. It's turn-based, and it's the greatest board game ever created; although seeing as there's so much to it, it's rubbish when played on a board and as such lives in your PC instead.

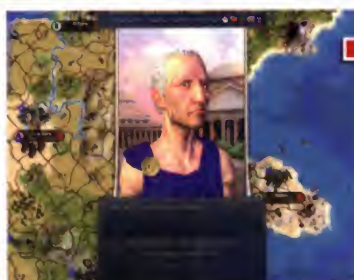
So what's new in this iteration? Well, let's start with the warm niceness and the gloss, seeing as that's what strikes you first after

installation. Beautiful world music chants in the background, giant globes spin, Leonard Nimoy mumbles relevant quotations whenever you discover a new technology: you're put straight into a cosy mindset that lies halfway between the striding animals of *The Lion King* and The Discovery Channel.

This snugness doesn't really spread to the graphics (someone standing behind me politely informed me that it "looks like it's

Irritating Caesar

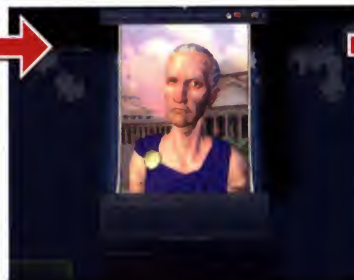
He may have been, seen and conquered, but he's really, really easy to wind up. Simply demand the smallest of tributes and he gets all grumpy



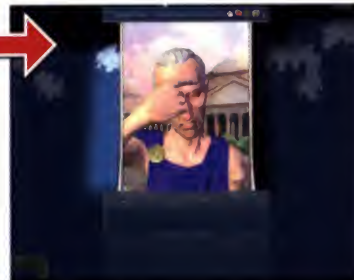
HERE I've taken over the Americans with the sole intention of baiting old Julius. Let's see if we can pull him back over the Rubicon...



I demand a gift of a cow in respect of my greatness. He's not happy as he can't even afford any magic beans. I laugh at Caesar and his stupid thumb!



IF you won't give me dairy, I'll give you death! My pikemen are advancing on Rome as I speak! You'll regret the day you denied my people Dairylea!



ME again! Am I annoying you yet? Am I? I was joking about the cows... Bit of a wind-up merchant, me! Hang on, you've sent your frigates where?



THE townsfolk of Will is Cool celebrate Will's coolness.



MUSKETS vs arrows, yet sometimes arrows win.

been kicked in the face"), but by its very nature *Civ* isn't a game in which you care much about visual niceties. Besides, everything is as colourful, decent and obvious as you'd ever need it to be. There is the zoomy (and slightly spinny) camera that all the marketing blurb demands these days but, quite frankly, who cares? This is *Civ*!

CONSTANT CRAVING

Having spent several evenings blankly staring into the mid-distance and pondering my nascent war with the Egyptians and wondering quite whether I can trust George Washington, I come to you as an addict with no hope of rehabilitation. I dream about it. I sit on public transport thinking about where I've gone wrong with my precious English

race and what I'll do differently with my next civilisation. I sit and stew about the infamous time in which I'd left my capital city (which I've been calling 'Will is Cool' since 1991) completely unguarded – allowing those bastard Romans to sneak in from my largely unpopulated Northern coast and take it without warning. In fact, I'm still fuming about that, absolutely bastard livid. I'm sitting here with my blood boiling at the impunity of a computer-generated race of Buddhist Romans, and I desperately want revenge – in this life or the next. And this, my friend, is the power of the *Civ*.

NEW TRICKS, OLD DOG

What's new, though? Well to kick off there are the great people, engineers, artists,

prophets, scientists, merchants and the like, who appear at intervals (encouraged by any wonders of the world you may have up your sleeve) and conjure up helpful bonuses – aiding city growth, researching stuff extra quick or perhaps double-teaming with other great minds and starting up a golden age of innovation. This all works very well, and certainly isn't quite as fiddly as the (nevertheless welcome) addition of religion – something that adds another layer to the Neapolitan ice cream that is Meier's creation.

I come to you as an addict with no hope of rehabilitation... This is the power of the *Civ*





CIVILISATIONS that start off in places like this get eaten alive early on.



CIV: the most uncaptionable game of all time?



SAY what you like about the Russians, but they like their windmills.

Essentially key faiths get founded in certain cities as soon as the relevant technologies are discovered – they then spread either through missionaries or trade routes regardless of national boundaries. Because of this a state religion isn't necessarily universally shared among your nation and neighbours (at one stage Will is Still Cool was Christian, Mos Eisley was Muslim and those pesky Buddhist Romans were upping the ante and trying to get me to convert to their way of thinking under

threat of violence). Remember, a happy nation is a unified nation, but you're a better strategist than me if you can get it.

COGS OF WAR

Cohorts 'n' combat have also been slightly upgraded this time around, and are liable to give established *Civ* hacks a mild shock when they march into enemy territory – so pay attention at the back. These days, units get promotions depending on how much action they see, and there's a massive range of bonuses that can be lavished upon them so you can tailor troops to your whim – city defence specialists, hillside guerrillas, woodland warriors, all that malarkey. Because of this your freshly researched musket-men won't necessarily trounce a bunch of blokes with pikes – and an added level of chin-beardery strokeage is ushered in. Should anyone be watching the battles over your shoulder then they will laugh and point (it looks like three wobbly toy soldiers poking a horse until one side falls over), but for us armchair generals the import is the difference between life and death – especially if your wobbly horse is pushed over by someone you know through the magic of *Civ IV*'s fabled multiplayer.

This is most definitely the field in which *Civ* has been most errant in times past

(*Civilization III: Play The World* being nothing short of a buggy and untested demonstration of computer gaming evil).

Now, however, it's been nailed: simultaneous turns, variable game speeds, the ability to join a game on the hop by taking over an AI opponent and game dynamics that leave you despising your best friend. Quite frankly, you needn't buy another game for the entirety of next year – *Civ* will suffice, and it gets deeper each time you play.

It's a game that's part of the establishment rather than one of the endless parade of fleeting moonlight installations that come and go with the seasons. A much-loved part of the PC gaming furniture that's been passed down from ancient times that we'll leave to our grandchildren when they're ready. Then they can hate the Romans too. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Functional, workmanlike, do the job
Sound Best soundtrack of the year
Multiplayer Dear god, yes

- ✓ Absolutely stunning turn-based strategy
- ✓ Unrivalled emotional attachment
- ✓ Intriguing new layers of gameplay
- ✓ As complicated as you want it to be
- ✗ Simpletons will moan about the graphics
- ✗ Might lose you your job and family

92

Don't trust the Romans



RollerCoaster TYCOON 3 WILD!

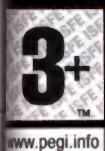
EXPERIENCE THE LATEST EXTREME COASTERS
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CONQUER 12 WILD! SCENARIOS* AND
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GUN READY JUST IN CASE



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FRONTIER

ATARI

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MAGNETO prides himself on his bridge-building skills.



IT might look like a giant blue cookie, but it's not.



CYCLOPS shoots laser beams from his eyes. Bless.

X-MEN LEGENDS II: RISE OF APOCALYPSE

Steve Hogarty is a mutant, shunned by society and forced to live in a hole

DEVELOPER Raven Software
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE www.x-men-legends.com
ETA October
PRICE £39.99



AT A GLANCE...

The X-Men save the world again, this time in RPG flavour with loads of skills and character customisation.

System requirements

HOW IT STACKS

FREEDOM FORCE 82%

DUNGEON SIEGE II 82%

X-MEN LEGENDS 2 67%

LAST TIME WE saw Wolverine on our desktops it was a horrible, horrible experience – X2: *Wolverine's Revenge* was an abortion of a game, akin to repeatedly smashing your own teeth in with a large hammer. So you'll be forgiven for being even slightly tentative of *X-Men Legends II*, a game in which you command both the X-Men and the Brotherhood (those are Magneto's guys, Magneto is the bad guy... Didn't you watch the movie?) in a top-down beat 'em up with smatterings of RPG elements to keep you interested.

In case you're wondering, Apocalypse is a mega-supervillain, the likes of which cause good guys and bad guys to form unwilling communions in an attempt to defeat the greater threat. This gives the respective allies (mainly Wolverine, that masterful aficionado of fine wit) a chance to exchange bad insults with mutants of the opposite group and repeatedly express that they don't like one another very much while waving their claws about angrily. But combine their mutant powers they must, for Apocalypse really is a twist of truly epic proportions.

Enlisting a team of four mutants from either the X-Men or the Brotherhood, the game typically gives you a list of objectives to complete around a certain area, and then throws a constant stream of enemies at you before you successfully complete your tasks, defeat a boss and continue the story. It almost feels like *Freedom Force*, in that you control one character at a time while the others are controlled by the AI, and of



MISTER Tongue: b-list hero and a hit with the ladies.



THE X-Men kill a lot of giant bugs.



PROBABLY the gayest-looking robots ever.



DESPITE his tough exterior, Wolverine enjoys Egyptian history.

Roll call

All your favourite mutants come out to play



With 15 of the genetic freaks at your disposal, three unlockable characters and a general mix of good mutants and bad mutants, you can create some pretty formidable teams. Our personal favourites are respectable bad guy Magneto, who fears fridge magnets and can control all metallic objects nearby. There's also Wolverine of course, the angst-ridden wolf-man with a heart of gold. Then there's Gambit, who can throw cards. Great special power there, mate.

course it's a superhero RPG – but it's around about there that the similarities evaporate.

TAKE THAT!

Pick up a joystick and it's immediately obvious that *X-Men Legends II* is just as much a console beat 'em up as it is a stats-driven RPG adventure. Each character has special powers, which can be unlocked and improved through levelling up; individual stats which can be increased as you progress; and enemies who drop loot and equipment to improve your mutant army.

It's possible to bypass the entire RPG half of the game by allowing the game to automatically assign powers, stats and equipment to your teams, but doing so ruins what little enjoyment is on offer here, reducing the game to nothing more than a mindless button-mashing exercise. Allow yourself to wander into the stats menu and get your hands dirty however, and you'll find there's some depth to learning the effectiveness of different character combinations and powers.

X-FACTOR

Every now and then you'll come across glowing blue X-Men symbols, which are indications that you can use one of your team's mutant powers to do something especially impressive – Iceman can put out a fire, for example, and Magneto can summon lots of bits of metal to construct an impromptu bridge (nothing Paul Daniels couldn't do if he tried).

There are many touches like this that keep you playing, but the truth is the good stuff is spread far too thinly over achingly long missions and a predictable, clichéd plot that gives no incentive to continue playing.

X-Men Legends II doesn't make much of a departure from the original *X-Men Legends* (unreleased on PC in case you're confused). It's about time somebody grabbed this licence by the proverbial and created something special. Sadly, this game isn't it. **PC**

PCZONE

Graphics Yesterday
Sound 100% authentic
Patrick Stewart
Multiplayer Yes

- ✓ Lots of superpowers
- ✓ Lots of X-Men
- ✓ It's quite long
- ✗ It's quite long
- ✗ Can get repetitive

67

Not quite legendary



ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

Enter his web of sin

DEVELOPER Vicarious Visions/Treyarch

PUBLISHER Activision

WEBSITE www.ultimatespiderman.com

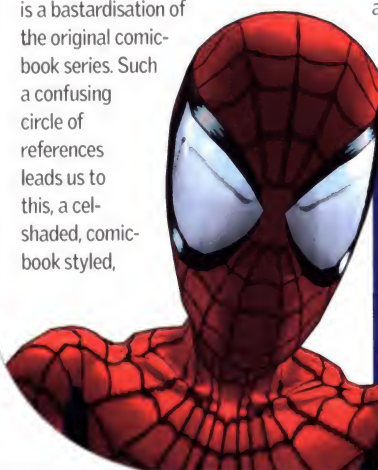
ETA October

PRICE £39.99

System requirements **2**

MARVEL PULLED OUT a bit of a doozy when fishing around in its magic hat full of market-friendly buzzwords, to stick in front of its latest *Spider-Man* series. The 'Amazing', 'Essential' and 'Spectacular' prefixes all filled their roles as meaningless pieces of superlative, but surely naming its next franchise '*Ultimate Spider-Man*' implies that this is the final and terminal retelling of the web-slinging hero's story.

It's more likely that the marketing types just thought the word sounded cool, ignoring trivial things like etymology and definitions. So here's the game of the new comic-book series, which is loosely based on the movie, which in turn is a bastardisation of the original comic-book series. Such a confusing circle of references leads us to this, a cel-shaded, comic-book styled,



free-roaming romp around Manhattan as the lycra-laden arachnid.

Surprisingly, it's not bad – far better than the pathetic PC version of *Spider-Man 2*. The gameplay mainly involves swinging through busy streets (which is great fun, superbly animated and just looks cool), locating various tasks such as races and rescues, and doing everything a spider can. Complete enough tasks and you unlock the next episode of the story, which is told through clever *XIII*-style comic-book narrative. Of course, it's still a console game, so expect dodgy camera angles and even dodgier controls, but with a decent PC joystick this becomes well worth a spin for Spidey fans.

Steve Hogarty

PCZONE

71

Sticky fingers

IndieZone

You won't find any of these indie games in the shops, but you can download them or get trial versions on our DVD.



Martin Korda grapples with space, birds and a rabbit's foot. Welcome to the world of indie gaming

LOOKS like rabbit's on the menu tonight.



LUGARU: THE RABBIT'S FOOT

DEVELOPER Wolfire Software WEBSITE www.wolfire.com/games.html PRICE \$19.95 (£11.17)

**INDIEZONE
GAME
OF THE
MONTH**

LUGARU IS AN ambitious and extremely entertaining third-person action/adventure, which sits somewhere between such old-school classics as *Prince Of Persia* and *Ecstatica*.

You play as Turner, a highly trained rabbit (yes, yes I know, it's an odd choice for a protagonist), whose entire family is wiped out by evil raiders. Intent on avenging their deaths, Turner sets out on a rampage of revenge, unwittingly uncovering a conspiracy along the way.

While *Lugaru's* story and dialogue are little more than adequate, the game's combat system is anything but.

Fast, exciting, varied and best of all, context-sensitive, it requires genuine skill and a quick eye to master it. Once you do though, you'll be ducking under enemy spin kicks and sweeping away their pivoting leg, duelling with swords and making strategic use of your stealth abilities to creep up behind enemies and slit their throats. The ragdoll physics are also mildly impressive, though they do occasionally look a tad ridiculous.

Despite its faults and shortness – you can complete the game in under four hours – *Lugaru: The Rabbit's Foot* is great fun, with a combat system that's easily worth the entry fee alone.

**PCZONE
71**



IF you don't fancy taking on an enemy head on, get the bugga from behind.



AFTER a couple of levels, *B.I.R.D.* starts getting seriously repetitive.

B.I.R.D

DEV Rainbow Creatures WEBSITE www.rainbowcreatures.com/game_bird.php PRICE \$19.95 (£11.17)

ACCORDING TO THE official website, *B.I.R.D.* is, 'a great non-violent game that will relax you'. Let's see, shall we?

You play as a bird who has to find its stolen eggs, and doing so involves navigating through 30 incredibly samey levels while avoiding projectiles that are hurled at you. As concepts go, great it certainly ain't.

Non-violent? Well, if opening up your sphincter and taking a dump on people's heads is considered non-violent, then I'd hate to see what Rainbow Creatures would do to someone in a

fight. Granted, it's a mildly amusing concept, but the novelty wears off pretty swiftly.

Finally, if 'relaxing' actually means 'so-repetitive-it'll-send-you-into-a-coma', then I'll hold my hands up and accept that maybe it's a fair point.

To be honest, *B.I.R.D.* does require a modicum of skill, and if you're under ten, you might well think it's the best thing since *Teletubbies*. If you're not, you'll probably just think it's a bit shit.

**PCZONE
40**

STARSCAPE

DEVELOPER Moonpod WEB www.moonpod.com PRICE \$24.95 (£13.97) (Download) \$34.95 (£19.57) (Boxed copy)

STARSCAPE IS A truly exquisite example of substance over looks. A space-based blaster with a difference, it boasts hours of immersive gameplay that'll make you forget the rosey visuals.

After your space station is accidentally transported into a hostile alien dimension, it's up to you to take the sole remaining fighter craft, mine resources out of asteroids and defend your station's last few survivors from marauding and ever-more numerous enemy craft, as you attempt to rebuild and get back home. But it's not all about button-

hammering action, as there's also a strategic element. It's up to you to repair and upgrade the space station – turrets, engines and missiles are just three of the technologies on offer – and construct backup fighters should those pesky alien swines ever get the better of you.

With its novel strategic elements and great blasting sections – that are made all the more challenging and entertaining by some vaguely Newtonian physics – *Starscape* is definitely worth a look.

PCZONE
70

UPGRADING your ship is one of several strategic elements on offer.

STARSCAPE'S later battles are immense.

THAT doesn't look good.



WANTED: one lone hero to save humanity. Uncoordinated pilots need not apply.

HYPERSPACE INVADER

DEVELOPER URSE Games WEB www.alawar.com PRICE \$19.99 (£11.20)

GIVEN THE NATURE of this section – where we're regularly sent GCSE computer science-level pap posing as vertical scrolling shooters – *Hyperspace Invader* came as a bit of a surprise.

Providing more bang for your buck than a weekend in Amsterdam, this futuristic shooter may not score highly on the originality stakes – an alien race is about to annihilate humanity and only you can stop them in your prototype fighter – but it more than makes up for it with some utterly absorbing, breath-sappingly frenetic gameplay.

Its 30 intense levels are packed with surprisingly intelligent enemies and

some truly meaty weapons. Plus, with each enemy carrying a health bar, you'll soon realise that this is no one-shot-one-kill shooter, as you frantically bob and weave around each level trying to finish off an enemy before the next arrive.

Top billing, though, must go to the sound, with some ear-bleedingly chunky explosions and a superb soundtrack raising the pulse to fat-burning proportions.

Original it's not, but as far as space-based reaction gaming goes, you won't find many more viscerally entertaining alternatives around.

PCZONE
67

Developer Q&A



TIM FISHER Indiepath
DIRECTOR
COMPANY Indiepath Ltd
WEBSITE www.indiepath.com
GAMES *Hightailed*, *GEOM*, *Caboodle*, *c'bubble*

PCZ Tell us about your company?

TIM Indiepath was formed in 2005 with a primary goal of developing and publishing non-violent computer games for the download market.

PCZ What advice would you give other budding indie game developers?

TIM When your game is complete, expect to spend more time marketing it than you did making it and be prepared to spend money. If business is not your thing, then come and talk to us and we'll manage that for you.

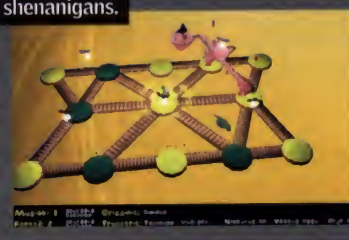
PCZ Where do you hope developing indie games will lead?

TIM My long-term goal is to establish Indiepath as a well-respected developer and publisher in this industry. We're certainly getting noticed and we're generating a lot of chatter. There's a long way to go yet, though.

PCZ What's the best thing about indie gaming?

TIM Freedom. Work to your own timescales, no pressure from mainstream publishers, a fantastic sense of satisfaction and a real tangible measure of success.

HIGHTAILED shenanigans.



BUDGET

Holes in your shoes? *Paul Presley* gives you gaming on the cheap...

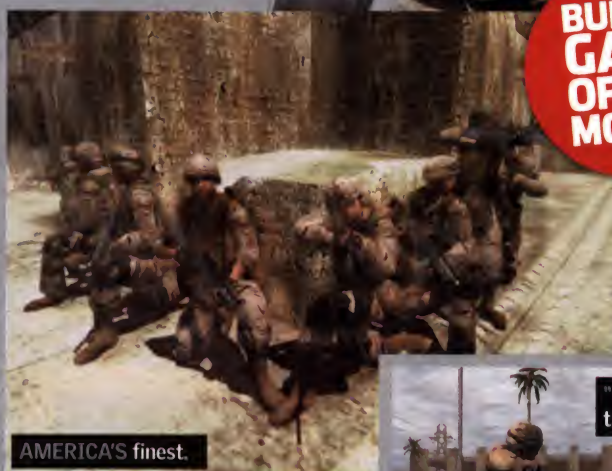


FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia WEBSITE www.fullspectrumwarrior.co.uk PRICE £9.99

TRYING SOMETHING NEW is always good. Uh, except when it isn't. Crossing the road wearing a blindfold just because you've never done it before isn't particularly good. Neither is punching your boss in the face. So, to clarify my earlier statement, trying something new is sometimes good, providing it falls within acceptable social protocols unlikely to cause harm or injury to yourself or others.

Trying something new with tactical shooter games is always a good thing though, and the thing *FSW* tries is eliminating the shooter part entirely, leaving you plenty of time to focus on the tactical side of things. Control a four-man squad of US soldier types fighting "against a modern-day fictional urban backdrop reminiscent of Middle Eastern locales" it says in the official documents (so that's Iraq then), using strategic commands and real military doctrine.



AMERICA'S finest.

Frankly, it's the best of a middling bunch this month, but you'll enjoy it if you like the novels of Andy McNab.

PCZONE
72

**BUDGET
GAME
OF THE
MONTH**



DIE, evil pigeons.



"WHERE'S
the trigger?"



BEST foot forward.

**THIS
MONTH
PCZONE**
SAVED MONEY BY...

Will discovering the joy of fresh veg, thus bypassing expensive junk food:

Saving: £3.87 per day



Suzy having an all-inclusive trip to Mexico paid for by her significant other:

Saving: "Farakin' 'undreds"

Pulling out of the Tory leadership race:

Saving: £348,000 in 'influence fees'



MOTO GP ULTIMATE RACING TECHNOLOGY 2

PUBLISHER Revival WEBSITE www.motogpthe game.com PRICE £4.99

THE RUNNING ZONE joke for a bike-racing sim is to say: "[Reviewer's name] buffs his helmet and slips into tight leathers etc..." Hilarious, no? Anyway, we tried to buff a helmet the other day and it's not as easy as you think. You have to use the right kind of pad and oil

or it gets covered in scratches. Plus, make sure you remove the policeman from underneath it first or you'll be in all sorts of bother (ho ho).

Anyway, the reason for all this is because *Moto GP 2* is all about drifting, and that's exactly what I've done with



this review. Hah! It's motorised bike racing, it's less impressive than the current generation of vroomers, but it's stupidly cheap now, so worth a bash if you fancy some fast-paced tyre action.

PCZONE
69



NOT clever.



LESS clever.



VERY clever.

MACE GRIFFIN: BOUNTY HUNTER

PUBLISHER Sold Out WEBSITE www.sold-out.co.uk PRICE £9.99



MMM... I like Bountys.

A HOOK! A hook! My kingdom for a unique selling point with which to wow the masses, to dazzle and delight! How about combining the frantic action of a first-person shooter with the frantic action of a, uh, first-person space sim?

I say sim. It's as much a space sim as the space flying bits of *UT2004*, which is to say not at all. Which the developer of *Mace* knew full well, and so kept the flying bits to a minimum, concentrating instead on the relentless foot-based blasting with relish.

Meaty weapons, a half-decent plot and dumb-as-planks bad guys all add up to a shooter that promises much, delivers a little, but troubles no-one.

PCZONE
61

BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON

PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia WEBSITE www.broken-sword.com PRICE £9.99

THE THING ABOUT sleeping dragons is that... Hmm, no. No good. Doesn't work. Let's see... We had a broken sword once. Well, not so much a sword, more a broken penknife... Better? A bit, but it still doesn't solve the problem of creating a gripping entry to this review. Let's think of something else. OK, how about if I push this paragraph over there instead, then pull this next one into its place, maybe then I can get access to the verdict box?

That's *Broken Sword's* main problem. The move to 3D brought with it puzzles

that no longer required you to actually use the cognitive side of your brain and introduced all manner of pointless crate manipulation instead. That and the story was packed with cliché, stereotyping and unrealistic pacing. Yeah, that didn't help either.

PCZONE
50



SOS! We need crates!

And the rest...

Old games + cheap prices = budget heaven (or hell)



THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD
£9.99, M.A.D.

Zombies, fahsands of them. All needing to be shot in the head. A pretty pointless home version of the coin-swallowing arcade relentless 'em up. You can use a light gun, but why bother?

PCZONE
31



SONIC HEROES
£9.99, M.A.D.

More obsessed by collecting shiny rings than... Er... A woman(?). Sonic The Hedgehog speeds onto a fairly decent PC conversion, Knuckles and Tails alongside him, motion-sickness-inducing levels intact. For the kids, but still good.

PCZONE
71



SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67
£9.99, M.A.D.

When will developers get Vietnam right? Never, it seems. *ShellShock* continues the hateful trend of glossing over the horrors of Nam for gameplay purposes, although it at least has a stab at getting the punctuation right.

PCZONE
39



EVEN planes had crates.



I spy something beginning with 'C'...

PCZONE TOP 5 BUDGET BUYS



1

FAR CRY

£9.99, Mastertronic

Better than *Half-Life 2*? So some say. The best non-gravity gun shooter of recent years anyway. An island paradise with extra explosions and top enemy AI.



2

X2: THE THREAT

£9.99, White Label

Begone *Freelancer*! The real space sim starts here. On budget anyway (*X3* is better yet but costs more). Freedom among the stars. Could life be better?



3

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

£9.99, Focus Multimedia

Glorious storytelling, engaging gameplay and the greenest lips in all of gaming-dom make the ever-overlooked *BG&E* a must-buy. Deep, imaginative, brilliant.



4

SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWII

£12.99, Codemasters

One of the finest strategy titles of recent years, *Soldiers* is a near-perfect blend of tactical thought, balls-out action and historical accuracy



5

BLACK & WHITE

£4.99, Sold Out

Molyneux's opus split opinion on release, but at this price you can't fault its ambition and gameplay. Monkey slapping has never been so cheap.

THE SUFFERING TIES THAT BIND

COMING SOON

9/10



"Chillingly atmospheric and gruesomely beautiful"



PlayStation 2



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YOUR SHOUT!

Speak your brains on the latest releases...



BLACK & WHITE 2

OUR SCORE: 93%

A majestic land with lush forests, sapphire waters and the screams of children aflame, as my giant lion sets yet another nursery ablaze, sending the infants scattering out into little dancing candles. This is the true beauty of *B&W2*. Many have felt disillusioned by the necessity to individually edit key files to exploit the graphics fully, but it's done nothing to clip the wings of this potentially brilliant game. In spite of its flaws, it's still enthralling and original – at least when played without an aggressively critical attitude. Plus, it's a great way to fritter away your life.

Daniel Hadert: **86%**

FAHRENHEIT

OUR SCORE: 90%

Linear storyline in which the player is hardly needed and has next to zero real ability to influence? Check. Abstract interaction similar to one of those dancing games so beloved of bored kids in the arcade? Check. Almost zero interaction with the environment? Check. Tokens and lives? Check. Yep, it's a low-rent console game.

I'm sure this is worth 90 per cent for the Xbox version in praise-the-console *ZONE*, but thanks for being so gloriously misleading – the first time since *Invisible War* by my reckoning (which, amazingly, was better than this). £9 for *Beyond Good & Evil* when *Fahren-shite* steals our wads?

Accept how wrong you were and beg forgiveness from anyone who shelled out expecting greatness...

Ashley Holloway: **67%**

Review of the Month



FAHRENHEIT

OUR SCORE: 90%

My wife has never been interested in computer games, but when I showed her the *Fahrenheit* demo, it was she who insisted we buy it. She lets me control the characters, but she watches and we decide together on which actions to take: that's multiplayer, who needs a LAN?! The game is unlike any other and is so thrilling. The unusual interactive controls, though they sound strange on paper, really do immerse you in the world, and couple this with a timer running out and you'll be on the edge of your seat. David Cage said: "If you hold prejudices against videogames, I hope *Fahrenheit* will help you reconsider your judgement". My hallucinogenic premonitions tell me that quite soon my Mrs will be the one unable to go to bed at a reasonable time or take that much-needed toilet break!

Alex Windel: **90%**

Accept how wrong you were and beg for forgiveness

FAHRENHEIT

OUR SCORE: 90%

Ground-breaking – and I mean it. A great game/interactive film. The story was as if god had written it himself, and the character design was mind-blowing – you feel a connection with everyone you encounter. There are only three things wrong with it: at one stage it gets very 'Americana corny'; the 'Dance Dance' actions were not the best idea; and we're still waiting for our next fix from these French geniuses! (I never thought I'd say that.) The best way to describe this game is *Grim Fandango* x20.

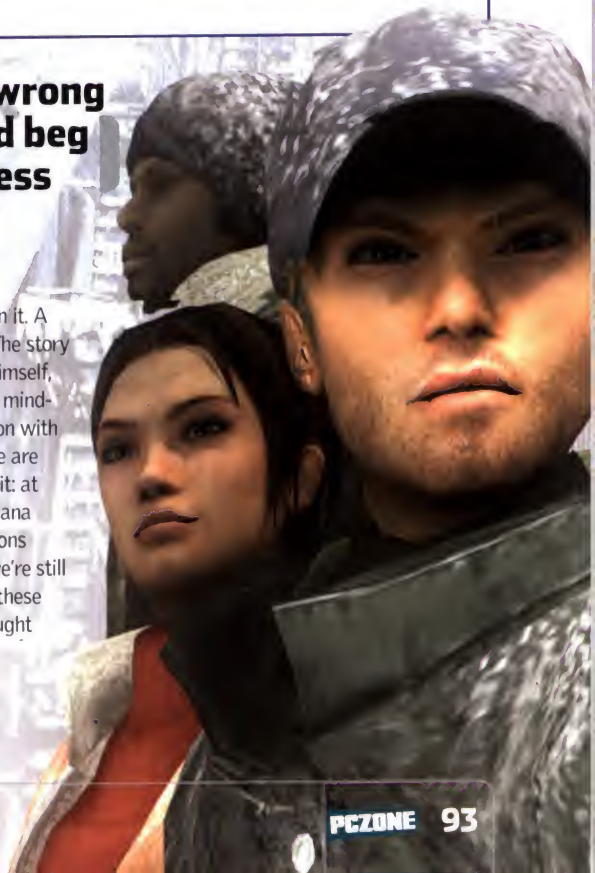
Nathan Shepherd: **98%**

YOU DO THE REVIEWS!

Agree? Disagree? Well the world wouldn't be the wonderful place it is if we all thought the same way. If you fancy sharing your thoughts with your fellow readers then jot them down (we find the recent advancements in parchment and ink technology to be handy), trim the amount of words to a MAXIMUM of 100, add a score out of 100 and send them to the address below. If we think they're worthy of sharing, we'll print them here. Better yet, one of you will be awarded our coveted Review of the Month award and be showered with a gift of some description.

Send your reviews to: yourshout@pczone.co.uk, with 'Your Shout' in the subject line.

Or use pen and paper and send them to: **PC ZONE, Your Shout, Future, 99 Baker St, London, W1U 6PP.**



BUYER'S GUIDE

What's on your hard drive? This lot will be if you've got any sense...



PCZONE TOP 5 UNDERRATED PC GAMES

- 1 **BEYOND GOOD & EVIL**
PCZ ISSUE: 138
- 2 **PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME**
PCZ ISSUE: 136
- 3 **MAFIA**
PCZ ISSUE: 119
- 4 **SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS**
PCZ ISSUE: 98
- 5 **RISE OF THE TRIAD**
PCZ ISSUE: 26



PCZONE TOP 5 GAMES - JAMIE SEFTON

- 1 **THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND**
PCZ ISSUE: 74
- 2 **PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5**
PCZ ISSUE: 161
- 3 **HALF-LIFE 2**
PCZ ISSUE: 148
- 4 **DARK FORCES**
PCZ ISSUE: 24
- 5 **TIE FIGHTER**
PCZ ISSUE: 18

PCZONE TOP 5 ALL-TIME HALL OF SHAME

- 1 **BIG BROTHER: THE GAME**
PCZ ISSUE: 96
- 2 **A-GENT**
PCZ ISSUE: 39
- 3 **WHO WANTS TO BEAT UP A MILLIONAIRE**
PCZ ISSUE: 96
- 4 **HELLBOY: ASYLUM SEEKER**
PCZ ISSUE: 142
- 5 **GENERAL ELECTION**
PCZ ISSUE: 105

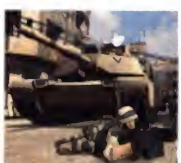
Shooters

Must buy!



HALF-LIFE 2
PCZ Issue: 148 - 97%

Everyone knew this would be good, but no-one quite expected the tour de force that Valve managed to pull off. Easily a contender for the best game of all time, *Half-Life 2* is just one stunning set-piece after another, and is guaranteed to leave you dribbling with awe. Be warned though, a (fast) online connection is needed for Valve's mandatory Steam delivery service.



BATTLEFIELD 2
PCZ Issue: 157 - 94%
If it's online action you want, look no further. *BF2* sets the gold standard for team-based shooting, with huge 64-player maps, squad and commander modes and the best graphics ever. Just make sure you have a ninja PC.



CALL OF DUTY
PCZ Issue: 136 - 94%
The definitive war-shooter, full of bombast, brutality and the rare FPS feeling that every bullet counts. It manages to conjure up feelings of awe, exhilaration and real fear - shooters rarely get this raw.



FAR CRY
PCZ Issue: 140 - 93%
In many eyes, Crytek's shooter outweighs even the mighty *Half-Life 2* in its tension, tactics and expansive level design. It's a mighty achievement with seemingly freeform action and the best sniping money can buy.



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004
PCZ Issue: 138 - 91%
UT2004 packs so much punch, you'd be hard pushed to find a flaw. Team games, deathmatches, tactical thinking in the Onslaught mode - everything the sci-fi shoot 'em up fan could want.



F.E.A.R.
PCZ Issue: 160 - 90%
With more shocks and scares than an episode of *Requiem* (and a much higher body count), *F.E.A.R.* pushes the shooter part of FPS to the limit. It might not be the scariest game ever, but it will make you jump.



SWAT 4
PCZ Issue: 154 - 86%
SWAT 4 is a tactical squad shooter that sings. Dark in places, brutal in others, it's the only shooter that allows you to tazer old ladies and drown them in pepper spray. Probably the best co-op experience around to boot.

Strategy

Must buy!



ROME: TOTAL WAR
PCZ Issue: 148 - 93%

Once upon a time, all strategy games were visual abortions and strictly for the hardcore (OK, a bit of a sweeping statement). But *Rome: Total War* changed all that, mixing breathtaking 3D with troop numbers reminiscent of a Hollywood epic, as well as staggering historical accuracy. The result is a masterpiece and a game just about anyone can enjoy. Hell, how many other titles are made into TV shows?



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH
PCZ Issue: 149 - 91%
Although the *LOTR* RTS doesn't hold a candle to the *Total War* franchise, there's nothing quite like ordering a Balrog around for guaranteed strategy fun.



BUDGET
SOLDIER'S: HEROES OF WORLD WAR II
PCZ Issue: 144 - 90%
The strategy of *Commandos* meets the fun of *Cannon Fodder* in this top-down game of tactics. Being the underdog has never been so much fun, and the rumble of tanks never so worrying.



AGE OF MYTHOLOGY
PCZ Issue: 123 - 90%
The *Age Of* series goes 3D in its best outing to date. Great gameplay, superb attention to detail and a strong story give this an unparalleled sense of atmosphere. What's more, it also boasts a decent map editor.



RISE OF NATIONS
PCZ Issue: 129 - 90%
One of the best of the 'last generation' of Empire builders, *Rise Of Nations* - coupled with exemplary expansion pack *Thrones And Patriots* - is a uniquely satisfying and addictive treatment of the *Civ* genre.



SID MEIER'S PIRATES!
PCZ Issue: 149 - 88%
If you've got some downtime at the close of the day, then *Pirates!* is the most relaxing (and swashbuckling) game around. Drifting around the Caribbean with a flotilla of ships and mischief on your mind is escapism at its finest.



GROUND CONTROL II: OPERATION EXODUS
PCZ Issue: 143 - 84%
Despite a few AI glitches, *GCII* is a great game if you prefer tactics to boring old resource management. A superb sci-fi effort with some intense freeform missions. Strat-fans should check it out.

Action/Adventure

Must buy!



MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE
PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%

The chosen poison for certain PCZ staffers after a long hard day, Payne's second outing is perhaps the most pixel-perfect example of joy-through-excessive-destruction on the market. Slicker than slick, breathtaking and quite beautiful, *Max Payne 2* provides the greatest gaming kicks that money can buy. It's extremely short, but so tense, well designed and replayable that you just won't care.



GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PCZ Issue: 155 - 92%
To think that the simple top-down car game has turned into this - a work of creative genius. Violent, brutal, smutty, freeform and hilarious - *San Andreas* is the summit of gaming achievement.



SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY
PCZ Issue: 154 - 91%
A tour de force from Ubisoft, *Splinter Cell* takes the *Splinter Cell* format and runs with it in solo, co-op and the now well-established spies vs mercenaries multiplayer. Smooth, lithe and good with a knife.



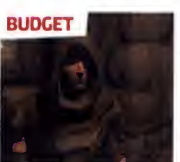
FAHRENHEIT
PCZ Issue: 159 - 90%
Murder most foul, with you as the killer. This twisting, turning, brilliantly-told plot features multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings. From the brains behind *The Nomad Soul*.



PSYCHONAUTS
PCZ Issue: 156 - 90%
Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its rocker - *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
PCZ Issue: 138 - 89%
We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hyllis is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.



THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS
PCZ Issue: 144 - 85%
Deadly Shadows not only brings *Thief's* sneak-and-steal mantra bang up-to-date, but also has some of the best level design in living memory. Play through *The Cradle* and you'll know true fear.

MMOs



EVERQUEST II

PCZ Issue: 150 - 95%
A *Star Trek* to *WOW's* *Star Wars*, *EQII* gives the original a much needed lick of paint, a whole new world to play in and a greater sense of depth and immersion. A time-sink in the true, classic sense.



WORLD OF WARCRAFT

PCZ Issue: 152 - 95%
Blizzard's recreation of the classic strategy world in MMO form doesn't disappoint. Beautiful to look at, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



GUILD WARS

PCZ Issue: 156 - 94%
How to make a gaming genre accessible to the masses. It shines with polish, thought and lack of monthly subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home too, thanks to a totally skills-based set-up.



EYE ONLINE

PCZ Issue: 152 - 88%
Elite online has been a long-held fantasy and this space sim is the closest yet to making it a reality. Its slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining or trading to piracy - it's up to you.



CITY OF HEROES

PCZ Issue: 155 - 86%
Nothing beats the feeling of spandex and fire-beams shooting from your eyes. This super-powered MMO lets you live all those heroic dreams to the full. Nietzsche would have a field day.

Simulation



BUDGET

X2: THE THREAT

PCZ Issue: 138 - 92%
Mesmerising in its detail and beauty, *X2* is the best modern-day *Elite* to date. More than a little intimidating to the casual gamer, the scope for exploration seems limitless.



IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES

PCZ Issue: 128 - 92%
While flight sims are becoming rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None more so than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Chocks away, comrade!



MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2004: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT

PCZ Issue: 133 - 89%
No, you don't shoot things, no there's no mission structure, yes there's the best non-combat flight experience to date. History can be fun.



BUDGET

FREELANCER

PCZ Issue: 128 - 84%
If *X2* is too slow for you, *Freelancer* should fit the bill. Plenty of trading, bounty-hunting and space piracy, but with the emphasis on action rather than realism. Space has never been this much fun.



FALCON 4.0

PCZ Issue: 158 - 82%
An example of fanbase enthusiasm saving a once-dead series, *Falcon 4.0* lives on thanks to the dedication of its hard-working players. The best modern-day fighter sim on the market.

Driving/Racing



NEW ENTRY!

GT LEGENDS

PCZ Issue: 161 - 92%
While *GTR* takes care of modern-day racing, *GT Legends* does the business for historical driving. A natural successor to *Grand Prix Legends*, it's like the swinging '60s never ended.



GTR

PCZ Issue: 153 - 90%
As real as it gets. Probably. The complete driving solution on a PC, with all the drifting, slanting and racing you need. Invest in a decent force-feedback steering wheel and pedals set-up though.



LIVE FOR SPEED

PCZ Issue: 158 - 90%
Online racing at its best. Realistic handling, hilarious crashes and a racing community second to none. On the right servers that is. A remarkable achievement by such a small team.



TOCA RACE DRIVER 2

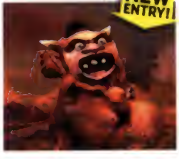
PCZ Issue: 142 - 89%
The most comprehensive driving game on the PC, *TOCA 2* is a must-have if you're into motors. 15 different motorsports to master, 52 tracks and rival drivers with top AI smarts.



NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND 2

PCZ Issue: 150 - 84%
Both bling and wicked, *NFSU2* builds on the first outing's might, with a superb free-roam mode, astounding graphics and even more pimping of your ride. Whack.

God games



NEW ENTRY!

BLACK & WHITE 2

PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%
The original split opinion, and this sequel does the same. We love it though, and think it's erased all the problems as well as adding plenty of new options to boot. It's gorgeous too.



BUDGET

CIVILIZATION III

PCZ Issue: 111 - 86%
What Buyer's Guide omits Meier's masterpiece? The *Civ* series is the backbone of PC gaming - they're the most addictive, compulsive and overtly playable strategy games ever made.



EVIL GENIUS

PCZ Issue: 147 - 84%
Ever wanted to say "No Mr Bond, I expect you to die", or create giant evil lairs inside hollow volcanoes? Well now you can with this great megalomaniac sim. It's always fun being bad.



VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG

PCZ Issue: 135 - 84%
An in-depth tycoon game with all the 3D graphical glitz and glamour of Vegas itself. Provide hotels, casinos and over-priced magic shows that suck the money out of the punters.



THE SIMS 2

PCZ Issue: 147 - 82%
Even the most childish of gamers couldn't grant *The Sims* recognition of both gaming cleverness and achievement. Mass-market it may be, it still deserves a place in the Buyer's Guide.

Sport



NEW ENTRY!

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5

PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%
Football, football, football. Morning, noon and night. The beautiful game in a beautiful game. Not only the best version of *Pro Evo* ever, also the best footy game ever.



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005

PCZ Issue: 149 - 90%
Now rid of the *Champ Man* tag, *FM* has continued to ladle goodness upon goodness into *Football Manager* - and it remains the premium creator of late-night manage-athons.



NEW ENTRY!

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006

PCZ Issue: 161 - 85%
Travel through time playing Tiger Woods throughout history. Only in an EA Sports game. *Tiger 06* is the best PC golf game yet, mainly thanks to the two career modes.



NHL 06

PCZ Issue: 160 - 84%
Ice hockey may not be the UK's number one sporting pastime, but that doesn't make EA Sports' incarnation of it any less fun. Exciting, breathless and violent ball-out fun for the whole family.



MADDEN 2005

PCZ Issue: 152 - 84%
Although the 2006 version is now upon us, this is actually the better option (at least until 2007 arrives). In truth, there's little to differ between the versions, but this one just feels more fluid.

RPGs



KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

PCZ Issue: 137 - 94%
KOTOR is the best *Star Wars* game of recent years. Moving, dramatic and fairly adult in tone, it also has a hefty dose of lightsabers to keep you happy.



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

PCZ Issue: 116 - 94%
Possibly the most intimidating, yet wonderful game we've played - the breadth and depth of *Morrowind* remains a remarkable achievement.



BUDGET

DEUS EX

PCZ Issue: 93 - 94%
This remains the benchmark in FPS RPGs. Twisting sci-fi plots, exciting freeform levels and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama help retain *Deus Ex* as the alpha male of the gaming world.



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

PCZ Issue: 118 - 91%
It may not have the depth of *Fallout*, but the customisation options in this are so extensive that it's been granted a very long life. Still a wonderfully immersive game.



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

PCZ Issue: 86 - 87%
Compelling storylines, great characterisation and a heart of pure darkness - *Planescape* is the best thing Interplay's Black Isle Studios ever gave us.

INCOMING!

All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

December

BATTLEFIELD 2: SPECIAL FORCES
DARK AND LIGHT
ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION
FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR: TEN HAMMERS
GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER
HALF-LIFE 2: AFTERMATH
HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE
PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES
SIN: EPISODES
STUBBS THE ZOMBIE
VIETCONG 2

EA
FARLAN ENTERTAINMENT
TAKE 2
THQ
UBISOFT
VALVE
EA
UBISOFT
VALVE/STEAM
THQ
TAKE 2

January

BATTLESTATIONS: MIDWAY
COMPANY OF HEROES
GOTHIC 3
HAMMER & SICKLE
HOTEL GIANT 2
NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2
PANZER ELITE ACTION
RISE & FALL: CIVILIZATIONS AT WAR
RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS
SPELLFORCE II
TITAN QUEST


SCI
THQ
JOWOOD
CDV
JOWOOD
ATARI
JOWOOD
MIDWAY
MICROSOFT
JOWOOD
TH

February

AUTO ASSAULT
CITY OF VILLAINS
GUILD WARS CHAPTER 2
HEART OF EMPIRE: ROME
HELLGATE: LONDON
HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY
LULA 3D
PARAWORLD
TABULA RASA
TOCA RACE DRIVER 3

NCISOFT
NCISOFT
NCISOFT
DEEP SILVER
NAMCO
EIDOS
CDV
JOWOOD
NCISOFT
CODEMASTERS

Tomorrow's communication for today's people

Powered by  Telappliant
The IP Telephony Company

HARDWARE

Better gaming through technology

HARDWARE EDITOR Phil Ward

Need for speed

MY LOVELY LAPTOP proved extremely useful during a recent drive to Scotland and the equally lovely capital city of Edinburgh.

Before making the journey, I bought a Talex speed camera detection system so I'd know where all the stupid 'safety' cameras were. If you've ever had the misfortune of travelling on the M6, you too will have seen vans lurking on every other bridge, catching out countless motorists who are wickedly jeopardising the lives of millions by doing 74mph in the outside lane.

And as anyone with half an ounce of common sense knows, it's the 'safety' vans that are jeopardising lives. Not because they're packed with high explosives (although of course they should be), but because when drivers see one, they rapidly adjust their speed. And by that I mean they jump on their brakes as though one of the four horsemen just vaulted the central reservation and pointed a bony finger at them.

But oh, bliss. Having the Talex system means I get prior warning of all the 'safety' nonsense, and thus prior warning of all the highly unsafe driving it causes. I update it by hooking to the arse-end of my laptop via USB and downloading a new database over the Internet. And for that I need an Internet connection. With numerous wireless hotspots around town, it wasn't a problem finding my way online.

Are laptops the future? That's two months on the trot I've waxed lyrical about them, and with a G70-based machine on the way for testing, I'm getting worried that it just might be true.

EYES ON NEWTON

Games environment processors likely to dominate shopping baskets next year

FUTUREMARK HAS ANNOUNCED it will include support for AGEIA's PhysX system in its future benchmarking products, allowing gamers to gauge the physics performance of their PCs. Next-gen versions of the 3DMark series will measure how different hardware configurations cope with the science of matter and energy in real-life game scenarios, both with and without the presence of AGEIA's PhysX chip.

"Physics performance is an increasingly important factor in games," says Tero Sarkkinen at Futuremark. The company says that by licensing the PhysX SDK, its

benchmark products will allow users to see how a dedicated hardware-based physics engine compares to one based in software.

Early next year, ASUS will be launching the first add-in physics processing board for around £150. With a heat sink, fan and 128MB DDR3 memory, the PhysX card looks like graphics hardware, but will provide a big performance boost to any software developed using the appropriate PhysX libraries.

Partners who've signed up include Epic, Ubisoft, Shiny, Mythic and Atari. You can even buy games development tools such as SOFTIMAGE|XSI v5.0 which use PhysX. It's going to be big next year. www.ageia.com



THE PhysX processor accelerates complex physics operations which would otherwise be calculated in software.

RADEON GETS PHYSICAL

Could ATI cards be used for physics processing?

The launch of the new Radeon X1000-series was accompanied by some surprising demonstrations of the flagship cards handling complex physics calculations – according to ATI, GPUs are significantly faster than CPUs in this particular line of work. How games developers will take advantage of all this processing power is not clear, especially as a good number of



ONE card makes the explosions, the other works out which way all the bits fly.

them are already in bed with AGEIA.

There's even been talk of a two-card setup, with one Radeon dedicated to handling the video and the other to deal with how the various elements of a gaming environment interact with one another. www.ati.com

NEWS ROUND-UP

With many broadband buyers in the UK keen to buy into monster download speeds – 8Mbps and more is offered by a raft of LLU ISPs such as Bulldog and Be bethere.co.uk – BT Wholesale is getting busy trialling its Broadband Max product in more than 50 exchanges around the country. The company's 8Mbps service is due for nationwide rollout in April of next year and will see an end to the current 2Mbps limit, already way behind cable rivals. www.btbroadband.com

Wil Harris at bit-tech.net wrote a funny piece on the senselessness of the video iPonce, bemoaning the fact that Apple is also charging DVD prices for a picture just over three molecules wide. Over the years, I've barely been able to contain my loathing for this sort of hardware because like a BMW or Villeroy & Boch bathroom suite, it says you're a sucker. My brother won an iPonce in a competition and ignored my pleas to immediately eBay it: within a week he was bored and now it lives at the bottom of my nephew's toybox. If you must spend hundreds on something you won't use more than twice, go buy a fondue set from Harrods. www.bit-tech.net



WARNING:
THIS MONTH'S
HARD WORDS

BY STEVE HOGARTY

PHYSX SYSTEM: Page 79 of *The Kama Sutra*, you will need: industrial-strength pulleys, various weights, two large burlap sacks and a washing-up liquid bottle. **MONSTER DOWNLOADS:** Blaming the boogie man for the mountains of porn on your hard drive. **INTELLIMOUSE EXPLORER:** A tiny endoscope used by veterinarians. **WEIGHT TRAY:** Used in Sainsbury's for purchasing carrots. **MASTER AND SLAVE:** Page 80 of *The Kama Sutra*, you will need: low self-esteem, excess body hair and a cow's worth of leather. **DPI:** Digital Porn Interface, technical term for the Internet. **SATA UNIT:** The Stupid Asshats unit of the Territorial Army: comprises 80 per cent of the organisation.

CASTROL GTX

Less quids engineering

The G70 chip inside every 7800 GTX contains over 300 million transistors, or three times as many as an Athlon FX. In all honesty, you need a powerful processor like the FX to go with it, although that's not something that will dent the score – anyone buying into this level of technology is not going to pair it with a second-hand Celeron.

But then it's also not overly expensive. £350 is a fair amount less than the first crop of 6800 Ultras from last year – cards that were not only late turning up, but were a devil to get hold of. The 7800 GTX has been in plentiful supply since its July launch, which is one of the most exciting things about it.

And what of ATI's comeback, the X1800 XT? Although I delayed my review of the 7800 GTX for some months, in the hope that I would be able to test the new Radeon against it, it's going to be another issue before that happens.

All I can tell you is the basic details: the 512MB X1800 XT will have 16 pixel pipelines and 8 vertex shaders, compared to the G70's 24 pixel pipelines and 8 vertex shaders, and that it will run 625MHz at the core and 1.5GHz memory.

Early reports say it's four months late and doesn't have the power to put the GTX's nose out of joint, but we'll see.



GV-NX78X256V-B

PRICE £350 MANUFACTURER GIGABYTE PHONE N/A WEBSITE uk.giga-byte.com

SPECIFICATION

256MB NVIDIA GeForce 7800 GTX. Dual DVI. Ancillaries include: 1x DSUB to DVI converter VIVO whip. Bundle: Joint Ops: Typhoon Rising, Xpand Rally, PowerDirector 3

IT SAYS HERE that the GeForce 7800 GTX is 41 times faster than integrated i915G graphics when run at 1,600x1,200 in 3DMark05, which is no more useful than knowing a Russell Hobbs 9206P Classic Coolwall 2-Slice Toaster is 41 times faster than holding the bread over a lit match. Mind you, the bar graph looks impressive.

So does the hardware. GIGABYTE's flagship is a supremely elegant card. I think its dashing looks are due in part to its length – at nine inches from shoulder to shoulder, it's two inches longer than any Radeon – and also because its single-slot design includes an attractively proportioned cooler. No gaudy stickers, funny colours or flashing lights, just sweeping lines and metal vanes like the inside of a gas turbine. Lovely.

And of course there's the fact it's noticeably faster than anything else, which always has the effect of making the ugliest

hardware seem beautiful. It beats both the GeForce 6800s and Radeon X850s, and its ability to widen the gap as the resolution increases is almost, well, sexual. These numbers are your ticket to the pleasures of next year's gaming, and if almost 16,000 marks in 3DMark03 with stock clocks doesn't give you the horn, then I'd wager you're not actually a gamer, but are probably into stuff like spreadsheets and *Championship Manager*. Put the magazine down and go play in the traffic.

There is one nagging doubt – when is there not? – which is that the 7800 GTX is not quite as stirring as when you saw your first 9700 Pro or 6800 Ultra. That could be because you and I are now complacent to video cards, which are more complex than our processors, or it could be because the leap in scores isn't that noticeable – 75fps on the old six versus 85fps on the new

seven. Could you tell such numbers apart? I'm not sure that I could.

Nevertheless, it's still has enough grunt to make you want to blow the dust from all your old games, put them back on your hard drive and crank up the detail. Is there any better sign of a card's greatness?



PC GAMING MOUSE

PRICE £25
MANUFACTURER
WEBSITE
www.saitek.com/uk

SPECIFICATION

Hardware: 256MB DDR3
NVIDIA GeForce 6600 GT
Ancillaries: VGA to DVI converter,
HDTV junction box
List of undesirable games: *Joint Ops*,
Xpand Rally, *Bonus Gamepack*

SAITEK'S RODENT IS the least expensive here. It's half the cost of the cheaper Logitech, but doesn't feel any less solid – the plastic has tactile qualities and is unlike the glassy stuff on older devices such as the IntelliMouse Explorer or a biro.

The buttons all have a very satisfying click to them, and the rubber-coated scroll wheel has a ratchet action that isn't overly obtrusive. Most important of all, the mouse is not only sculpted and a delight to hold, but is ambidextrous – it's just as good for leftists as for rightists. It's also as accurate as you need it to be.

Like the others, the Saitek has a resolution toggle on the middle of its spine to switch between 800 and 1,600dpi, but it's too far back and too recessed to find without looking. As with all toggles, you lower the resolution in order to slow your movement and increase accuracy.



M2

PRICE £30 **MANUFACTURER** Raptor Gaming
WEBSITE www.raptor-gaming.com

SPECIFICATION

Hardware: 256MB DDR3 NVIDIA GeForce 6600 GT
Ancillaries: VGA to DVI converter, HDTV junction box
List of undesirable games: *Xpand Rally*

RAPTOR GAMING'S M2 is rather insubstantial. Even with the optional 20g weight tucked in its rear compartment, it feels too light and toy-like. On the upside, the plastic has a rubberised coating and it's a mouse you can use all day long – the wing on the right makes it determinedly one-handed, but it means all your fingers are supported off the mat.

But the design still needs work. Although the wing is useful, it leaves your pinkie too close to the right-click, so it's easy to trigger it by mistake. On the left, the two thumb buttons are too low, meaning you're in contact with them the whole time. Added to which, the wheel ratchet is too weak and the

centre click too firm. Most annoyingly, though, the dpi toggle cycles through a number of resolutions, but gives no indication as to which one is selected, leaving you too fast or too slow at the wrong moment.



PCZONE



87

PCZONE



79

G5

PRICE £49
MANUFACTURER
Logitech
WEBSITE
www.logitech.com

SPECIFICATION

Hardware: 256MB DDR3 ATI
Radeon X800 GT
Ancillaries: VGA to DVI converter,
HDTV junction box
List of undesirable games: *Counter-Strike*,
Condition Zero

THE G5 USES the same insanely accurate laser engine as its bigger brother, but comes with a useful curl-free cord. I've been saying for years that wireless devices are less than brilliant for gaming, and it's this rather than the G7 which is being touted as the ideal clicker for hardcore gamers. It's built to the Swiss company's usual high standards, with finger-friendly plastics and responsive buttons.

What is the battery compartment on the G7 is a chamber for the weight tray on

the G5. Give the mouse the inertia that's right for you by loading the tray with miniature counterweights. It might sound like a gimmick, but I prefer a mouse to be not too heavy and not too light – using the little box of counterweights I could fine-tune the G5 to be what I considered perfect. And what could be better than that?



G7

PRICE £69 **MANUFACTURER** Logitech
WEBSITE www.logitech.com

SPECIFICATION

Hardware: 256MB DDR3 ATI Radeon
X800 GT
Ancillaries: VGA to DVI converter,
HDTV junction box
List of undesirable games: *Splinter Cell*, *Pandora Tomorrow*

OF ALL THE reviews of the MX1000, only mine (*PCZ* 152, 60%) stood out as overwhelmingly negative – I described it as a supremely clever waste of your money. Almost a year later, reviews of the G7 all describe the MX1000's numerous shortcomings, such as its floppy cock scroll wheel and the annoying lag when you centre the mouse on its mat. How I love being right.

The G7 is the clicker the MX1000 should have been. The laser snaps 7,000 images per second, there's no lag and the tilt action on the scroll wheel now feels like

a help rather than a handicap. Even the Teflon pads are a decent size, meaning they slide well and don't collect dirt. It's also much lighter and, as with the G5 the dpi toggle, allows you to switch between three different resolutions. What stops it reaching the nineties is the silly price.



PCZONE



91

PCZONE



87

HOW TO... CHANGE YOUR HARD DISK

Things aren't always as complex as they seem. Not with *Phil Wand* on hand to help...

Need:

Acronis True Image from www.acronis.com, new hard disk, screwdriver

Time

Minimum 30 minutes

Difficulty level



Phil Wand

HAL 9000

Medium Doofus

Big Brother contestant

Jamie Sefton

RUNNING OUT OF room? Want to go faster? Is the drive making irregular clicking noises or wailing like a banshee? Get a new one! Check your motherboard manual or the manufacturer's website to see which of the two drive types are supported, and

then go shopping – 80GB drives are now as low as £35.

But how do you install it? And how do you get all your MP3s, programs, games, videos and patches transferred to the new disk? Until recently, the process was gruelling one, but with the arrival of

Acronis True Image, it's now one of the simplest upgrades you can do.

True Image is an amazing utility which costs less than a game and does all the work for you. It's also multi-talented, and you'll be seeing it again next month when we look at how to back-up your data.

01 Open up the case

Free your PC from its cables and put it on a desk with the lid facing upwards. On a tower case, such as the PC shown in our pictures, that means tipping it on its side. Reconnect it to the mains but ensure the socket is off at the wall – this step ensures the case is properly earthed but won't electrocute you. Remove the screws which hold the lid in place or push the lever to release it, then simply lift it off.



KEEP the case plugged in but switched off.



Cloning is the process of transferring the contents of one disk to another. **IDE** is the most popular term for the most common type of **hard disk drive** or **HDD** before the introduction of **SATA** two years ago; you may also see IDE drives referred to as **ATA** or **PATA**. There are two IDE devices per cable, one **Master** and one **Slave**, determined by a sleeve connector **jumper** on the rear. Older motherboards generally have two IDE channels (marked primary and secondary, or 0 and 1), and newer boards are likely to offer a single IDE channel for a CD-ROM and multiple **SATA** connections. **Serial ATA**, or **SATA**, is the successor to IDE. On paper it's faster than its predecessor, but in practice you won't notice the difference. A **partition** is a division on your disk separating areas of data. Think of it as a wall between rooms. Each partition has its own drive letter



DON'T do this with your old hard disk. At least, not until you know the new one works.

WHY NOT: DOUBLE-UP YOUR DRIVES

The procedure on this page describes changing your hard drive in the event your existing one is damaged, or you wish to move your system to a bigger disk. If you just need more space, consider adding a second drive alongside the one you have now. Follow the steps for installing it, then run Windows, open True Image and double-click its Add New Disk wizard. Highlight the new drive in the list and follow the prompts to prepare it. Job done!

02 Add the new drive

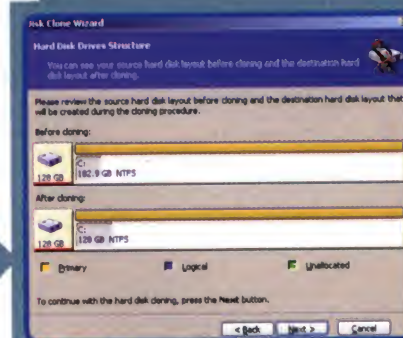
Unpack the new drive. If it's an IDE unit, you'll need to configure it as a Master or Slave using the jumper connector on the rear – remember that IDE channels can only have one of each type, and that you'll probably have to share the ribbon cable with an existing device. If it's a SATA unit, plug it directly to one of the interfaces on the motherboard. Attach a power connector to the drive and then restart the PC.



BE prepared for chafed knuckles.

03 Get set to clone

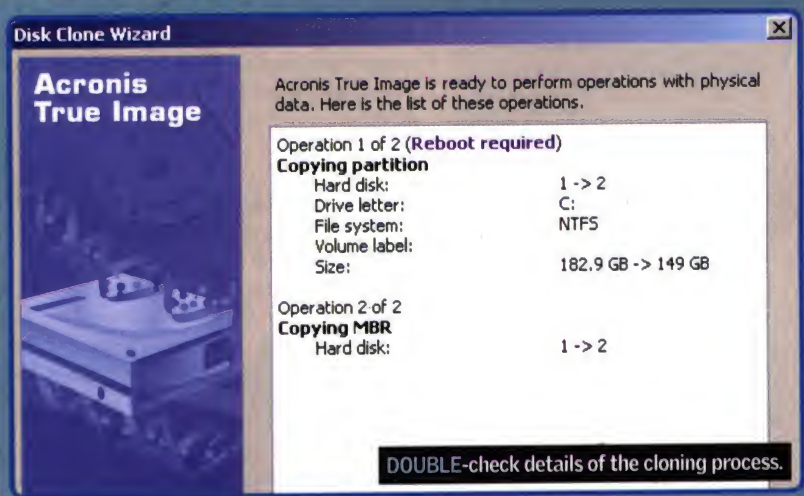
Install and open True Image and double-click the Disk Clone icon in the New Disk Deployment section of the main window. When prompted, choose Automatic cloning and then highlight the source drive in the list – the drive containing your Windows system and data you wish to copy. The next step is to highlight the target drive – the one you installed in Step 2. If it's new, it will show green unallocated space in the display at the bottom.



SELECTING the source and target drives.

04 Starting the clone process

Once you've selected a source and target drive in the Disk Clone wizard, you'll see a summary of the actions True Image will take when you click Proceed. Check and check again the details are correct, because what you're about to do will be permanent. Cloning can take anywhere from ten minutes to several hours depending on your configuration. When True Image has completed, get it ready for surgery again by repeating what you did in Step 1.



DOUBLE-check details of the cloning process.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Have things gone awry? Stroke your head while you peruse the following...

- ✗ There's no room for the extra hard drive.
- ✓ Install the drive in place of your CD. When you've transferred the data, reconnect the CD.
- ✗ The new hard drive doesn't seem to be recognised.
- ✓ Ensure you've connected the drive and have given it power. If it's an older IDE unit, make sure the jumper is in the right place.
- ✗ The PC won't boot.
- ✓ Don't panic. You still have your original hard drive, so replace that and run through the cloning process again.
- ✗ True Image bombed out.
- ✓ True Image 9 is a recent product and there are bugs. However, it remains an invaluable tool and is the best product of its type, so hang in there. Check the Acronis site for a patch.

Visit the Dear Wandy forums at www.dearwandy.com

05 Hold your breath

Remove what is now your old system disk by unscrewing it and putting it somewhere safe – do NOT discard it or use it to hammer nails until you're sure the cloning worked and that your machine boots using the other disk. Reconfigure the new drive to be a Master if it was the only drive on that channel and then turn on the PC. You should find yourself back at the Windows desktop, only now on your spanking new drive!



IF successful, you should see a familiar screen.



DEAR WANDY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...



Problems?

We've all got them you know... Up to your neck in debt? Partner sleeping around? A propensity to wake up on Saturday morning not knowing what the hell happened? We can't help with any of those (but if you know the answers, let us know), but we can solve all of your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything and is willing to help if you email him at wandy@dearwandy.com including as much information as necessary and system specs where applicable.

FLASH BASTARD

Q I currently have an XFX GeForce 5900XT that I'm quite happy with, but like most people I'd like something a bit faster. My friend told me that I could flash the BIOS on the XT to a 5950 Ultra – is that true, and would it actually work? I've scoured the forums and am rather confused by it all. I've already downloaded a file for the XFX 5950 Ultra, and also for the XFX 5900XT in case it all goes tits-up.

Karl Rogers

A The short answer is yes, you can flash the BIOS of a lower GeForce 5900 variant with the BIOS of a much higher one – the idea being that it will adopt the better card's rates and voltages. It won't give you Ultra-rivalling performance, but it will give you better scores in the benchmarks.

Sadly though, I can't see you having a lot of luck with your 5900 XT. The XT was introduced to conquer the mainstream arena and was designed down to a price. Compared to the expensive monsters on which it's based, its memory is of a plainly lesser specification and it won't take kindly to being clocked at Ultra speeds. At least, that's my experience.

You can always dip your toe in the

water for yourself by overclocking the card using the hidden NVIDIA control panel (Google for 'coolbits' to unlock it), or pulling on sliders in a third-party utility like Riva Tuner or PowerStrip. If you can push your card beyond 850MHz towards 900MHz and maintain total stability in a demanding game or benchmark, there's a chance the BIOS will work.

However, don't go expecting miracles. Unlike some BIOS tweaks, this one won't free up pipelines or other blocked-off features – I'd be surprised if you gained much more than 5 per cent in any given benchmark. You may also suffer unwanted side effects, such as the loss of VIVO or the appearance of artefacts at the Windows desktop. Your efforts would be better directed to your loft or garage where you can hunt around for random crap to sell on eBay and use the proceeds to buy a better card. An X800 GT is only £100.

CARRY ON GAMING

Q I'm thinking of buying a laptop for school, and of course for gaming. I'll probably buy the Acer TravelMate

8103WLMI. It has a Pentium M 750 1.8GHz, 80GB

HDD, 512 MB RAM and an ATI Radeon X700 128MB graphics card. The problem is, will this laptop have high enough specs to run games like *Far Cry*, *Doom 3*, *Half-Life 2* and *Battlefield 2*? And will the specs be able to run games coming out in a year or two?

Corinna

A For around £1,200, the TravelMate 8103WLMI is an excellent choice. A premium quality 15.4-inch WSXGA+ screen (that's 1680 x 1050), a gamer-friendly video card, comprehensive wired and wireless networking features, and with a granite-like build quality, it's likely to last through all the bumps and knocks.

I can't tell you how games which have yet to be released will perform on it, because there's no way of knowing what features they'll be using. It's possible that by the middle of next year, many of the biggest titles will demand the presence of an AGEIA PhysX Processor – and laptop users will be out of luck. So don't go expecting it to be future-proof – because no computer is.

As for today's titles, as long as you run them at 1024x768, I think you'll be pleasantly surprised. I wrote last month that a friend's IBM laptop with the identical 1.8GHz Pentium M 750 and Radeon X300 was seriously impressive in games – a higher specification Acer can only go faster. The only suggestion I'd make is that you hunt around for a variant with the new GeForce Go 7800GTX. Then it'll really blow your socks off.



DRIVER WATCH
Keep your PC happy

GRAPHICS

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 59	21-SEP-05
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE 78.01	02-SEP-05

SOUND

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
Creative	SB X-FI 2.070003	22-AUG-05
Creative	AUDIGY 2.08000221	21-SEP-04

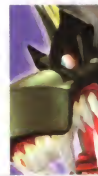
LOOKS like poor ol' Jack's been in the wars again.

@ wandy@dearwandy.com

✉ dearwandy, pc zone, future publishing, 99 baker st, london, w1u 6fp

I had trouble setting up a wireless LAN last year, caused by the encryption and a nearby car alarm

Daniel Neve gives Wandy some alarming news



WIRELESS YARN

Q I had a lot of trouble with setting up a wireless LAN last year. This was caused by two main problems: the encryption and a nearby car alarm.

If you have a different brand of wireless card to the router or access point, you may find the computer can't connect, or does, but no network programs appear to work. The solution is to turn off WEP and use MAC address filtering instead.

The second problem we initially thought was due to the number of walls between the router and laptop as it wouldn't work anywhere inside the room, but when we took the laptop into the hallway it would jump to life and start working. However, it occasionally worked in the room, so why not all the time? We had the idea that it might be the neighbour's car alarm – sure enough, changing the channel on router fixed the problem!

Daniel Neve

A Interesting, thanks for writing in. And just like you had two problems, I have two comments. The first is that you rarely need to disable WEP and resort to a heavy-handed approach like MAC filtering. Nine times out of ten, WEP problems are down to minor differences in the way wireless vendors store and read the WEP key – as long as you use the hexadecimal key rather than the plain ASCII text you should be fine. And second, I know of house alarms and CCTV security systems using the same frequencies as WLANs, but not car devices! Could you write and let me know which one?

STOP AND START

Q For some reason, my PC has decided it's going to restart at random



intervals. This usually happens when playing games, and could be anything from 10 minutes to a couple of hours before the reset occurs. I've put in new RAM. I've installed a new hard disk. I've reformatted and reinstalled Windows. I've even tried different graphics cards and it still keeps happening. The only thing I can think of is that my 300W PSU is over the hill...

Gordon

A Well, from what you've said and what you've done it certainly sounds like something hardware rather than something software.

My first port of call would be the temperature inside your case: is your PC under a desk or up against a wall? How many cooling fans do you have? Have you pulled the heat sink from the processor and reseated it with new thermal compound? Random restarts can be something expensive, like a failing motherboard or duff memory, or they can simply be because the heat is building up inside the case. A game punishes your hardware and all the energy used to entertain you creates heat – and you need to get rid of it.

But if that's not the problem, then yes, I'd suspect that old 300W power supply. From the list you supplied, you have a healthy number of USB devices as well as a DVD rewriter and half-decent graphics card – all these things need feeding. Go for a 400W or better Antec or Tagan.

50 UTILITIES YOU HAVE TO USE BEFORE YOU DIE

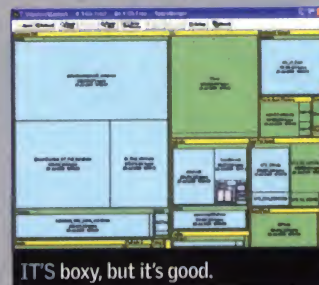
4 SPACEMONGER 1.4

EXPECT TO PAY Nowt
www.werkema.com

In the real world, it's easy to tell how much crap you have. Empty boxes, games boxes, video cards, soundcards, random piles of grubby-looking keyboards, random piles of empty jewel cases, shards of polystyrene, those funny little sachets of silica gel, Dominos pizza dips and hundreds and thousands of tiny screws littering every surface like the topping of a giant fairy cake. Visitors joke that they can't remember whether you have a floor, and will refuse cups of tea on the basis that they might catch something or trip over and scald themselves.

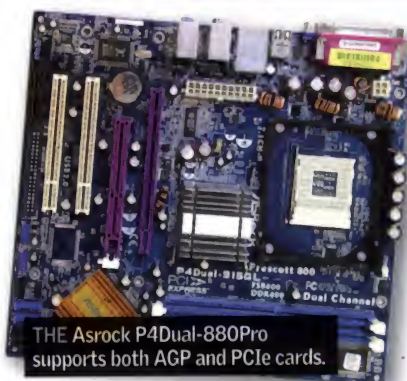
When it comes to your hard drive, things get somewhat harder. With all your possessions tucked out the way as electronic zeros and noughts, the levels of crap can quickly build up – it's hard to appreciate just how many MP3s, videos and pictures of boobies you've amassed when you're not ankle-deep in them. But there is a way to find out what you have and what's taking up most room.

SpaceMonger is a freeware utility which shows you a graphical



representation of your hard drive. Each box represents a folder on the disk, the size of which is directly related to how much space it's taking up – hence the name. Double-click on a box to drill down through the folders; right-click and choose the relevant menu entry to delete what you don't want. It's all so intuitive that you'll never need to read the manual.

Look out for version 2.1, which the author has been promising for the last thousand years or so.



PCI DISTRESS

Q I have an ASUS motherboard with a 3.2GHz Pentium 4 and 1GB RAM with a Radeon 9200. I've been looking to

upgrade my graphics card. Some of the PCI Express cards look juicy, but when I've looked for a PCIe motherboard for my Socket 478 Pentium, there aren't any. Do I have to buy a new processor before I can have the card I want?

Tim Forman

A You can buy Socket 478 motherboards that feature support for PCI Express, but they are few and far between and hard to find in this country. You can buy motherboards like the Asrock P4Dual-880Pro which supports your 478 Pentium, your AGP card and your next PCI Express card too – but perhaps the best bit is that it'll cost you no more than £45. **PCZ**


**WARNING:
DON'T TRY
THIS AT HOME!**

A relative of mine spent a not inconsiderable amount of money upgrading to a Fatal1ty AABXE. It's a great board, I told him, but knew he hadn't done his homework. Sure enough, I was inundated with questions. What was this LGA775 thing? Why won't the AGP card go in the hole? PCI what? What's DDR2? How was he supposed to know what a SATA was? Nothing he had would fit, and he'd need a new CPU, video card, RAM and hard drive before he could tell if the Fatal1ty AABXE had been worth the effort. Somehow it was all my bloody fault...

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with tantrums and egos.**



SHOOT THE MOVIES!

Then share them online.

REMEMBER:
YOU ALSO NEED
MONEY FOR FOOD
AND CLOTHING

We are legally required to remind readers that money splashed on hardware may be better spent on families, wives and girlfriends. PC ZONE isn't liable for any estrangement that may ensue.

HARDWARE DIVIDE

The best on the market whether you're filthy rich or do your weekly shop at Aldi...

LOADED?

GRAPHICS

GV-NX78X256V-B

EXPECT TO PAY £350

MANUFACTURER GIGABYTE

WEBSITE uk.giga-byte.com

Emphatically the fastest card we've tested. Unlike our favourite 6600 GT, GIGABYTE's 7800 GTX is built to reference specifications with a 430MHz processor and 256MB of 1.2GHz DDR3. Hunt around and you can buy an even faster variant or just overclock the crap out of this one. It seems to enjoy it.



PROCESSOR

ATHLON 64 FX-57

EXPECT TO PAY £700

MANUFACTURER AMD

WEBSITE www.amd.co.uk

For extreme performance, the flagship Athlon is the only processor to buy – even if it makes the same dent in your bank account as last month's mortgage payment. With AMD's new memory controller, unlocked multiplier and highest ever clock speed, the latest FX is the fastest thing inside any PC.

MOTHERBOARD

FATALITY AN8 SLI

EXPECT TO PAY £130

MANUFACTURER ABIT

WEBSITE www.abit.com.tw

Designed specifically for gaming, the nForce4 SLI-based Fatality AN8 supports all 939-pin AMD processors. As well as SLI support it features ABIT's Guru Panel, a front-mounted display unit for overclockers. The board also uses a bevy of ABIT features, including OTES cooling and AudioMAX 71 onboard audio.

HDD

RAPTOR 74GB

EXPECT TO PAY £118

MANUFACTURER Western Digital

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

Travelling at 10,000rpm and with a 4.5ms seek time, the Raptor is billed as the world's fastest SATA drive. And although it's not especially large, it's big enough for a dedicated gaming rig. Two of them in RAID Q configuration will give you almost 150GB and really make *Battlefield 2* fly.

SCREEN

MULTISYNC LCD1970GX

EXPECT TO PAY £360

MANUFACTURER NEC Mitsubishi

WEBSITE www.nec-display-solutions.co.uk

The LCD1970GX is a 19in LCD screen, with an 8ms response time and an inky black glass screen that saturates all the colours and darkens the shadows. It includes a joystick controller for the on-screen display, and a four-port USB hub.

SOUND CARD

SOUND BLASTER X-FI FATALITY FPS

EXPECT TO PAY £179

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

Slightly bonkers soundcard for audiophiles with deep pockets. Supports EAX 5.0, with 64MB X-RAM for top quality sound effects. CMSS-3D works magic on a stereo signal and makes headphone gaming crystal. Sounds nicer than an Audigy, but still painfully pricey.

SPEAKERS

Z-5500

EXPECT TO PAY £220

MANUFACTURER Logitech

WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk

They'll cost you over £200, but they're also the best speakers we've ever tested at PC ZONE. They make both games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself blowing the dust from your old CDs and DVDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

SKINT?

GRAPHICS

GV-NX66T128VP TURBO FORCE

EXPECT TO PAY £133

MANUFACTURER GIGABYTE

WEBSITE uk.giga-byte.com

A fanless heat-pipe arrangement keeps this GeForce cool and silent. GIGABYTE claims a 38 per cent speed hike over a regular card – not quite, but the boost is noticeable – and it's definitely the fastest 6600GT we've tested. *Thief: Deadly Shadows* and *Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising* are bundled, and full VIVO capabilities allow you to capture and edit video from an external source – PowerDirector comes free. A stunning package at a stunning price.



PROCESSOR

ATHLON 64 3000+

EXPECT TO PAY £95

MANUFACTURER AMD

WEBSITE www.amd.co.uk

If you don't mind getting your hands dirty in the BIOS, Athlon 64s can be highly rewarding – particularly so on an nForce4 motherboard. Famous for overclocking and top performance in games, there's really no alternative. This AMD chip is the one to have if you're building to a budget.

MOTHERBOARD

A8N-E NFORCE4 ULTRA

EXPECT TO PAY £80

MANUFACTURER ASUS

WEBSITE uk.asus.com

The A8N-E supports the full range of Athlon 64 FX, dual-core Athlon 64 X2 and Athlon 64 chips, plus PCI Express and 7.1 channel audio. The nForce4 Ultra chipset has more features than a circus has clowns, and ASUS includes a raft of its own, as well as some serious overclocking tools.

HDD

1200JD SATA

EXPECT TO PAY £55

MANUFACTURER Western Digital

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

It's not like a 120GB hard drive is unfeasibly huge any more, but it's more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, a couple of hundred music files and the odd porn flick will still leave plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre.

SCREEN

VE710S

EXPECT TO PAY £152

MANUFACTURER ViewSonic

WEBSITE www.viewsonic.co.uk

Not a lot of dosh buys you an awful lot of screen. The VE710S is a budget-priced 17in flat panel featuring an 8ms response time and 1,280x1,024 resolution and producing bright, crisp images worthy of the ViewSonic name. The company's UltraBrite technology gives rich and vivid colours in games.

SOUND CARD

SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE

EXPECT TO PAY £34

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

If you're a casual gamer, there's little point throwing half a mortgage payment at your soundcard because you'll not be able to tell the difference. The cheap Audigy features EAX 4.0 and Dolby Digital EX support, and makes an awful lot of sense.

SPEAKERS

INSPIRE P5800

EXPECT TO PAY £40

MANUFACTURER Creative

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

You can go cheaper, but to meet the quality of the P5800 you'll need spend a lot more, as there's no better set in this price range. The subwoofer is deep and creamy, the satellites crisp and clean. A wired remote, line-in and headphone jack complete a very decent little package.



WATCHDOG

Rotten companies need sorting – and good ones need praising...

Here to help!

Companies pissing you off? Don't feel your voice is strong enough to shout down the suits? Email Suzy at watchdog@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog', or write to her at the address above. Pleased remember to include your name, address and contact number, and all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.

ELITE GOES AWOL

Peter Eyre's graphics were starting to look a little dated, so after a bit of investigation he decided to treat himself to an NVIDIA 6800 Ultra. Having just been released, and with even the esteemed PC ZONE finding it hard to get hold of one, Peter was forced to search high and low.

Eventually, he stumbled upon a company on ebay called Elite PC Systems who had the card in stock, and so he promptly ordered it way back in May 2004. But that was to be the last contact he had from the company, so in January he

consumer complaints and then pass the details onto the relevant Trading Standards staff. If you've also been mucked around by Elite PC Systems of Airdrie, Lanarkshire (ex-website of www.elitepcsystems.co.uk), you're advised to contact Consumer Direct as soon as possible on 0845 4040 506. It's scary stuff, with some customers having been conned out of thousands of pounds, but remember it's always a good idea to buy any items over £100 using a credit card, as this affords you some insurance via the Consumer Credit Act, 1974.


HOT UNDER THE COLLAR

David Johnston's PC has been getting a bit hot and bothered recently, to the extent that it's started to overheat and then turn itself off. Looking about for a solution, David eventually settled on purchasing an expansion slot cooler. After looking on PriceGrabber.co.uk, he found one in stock at epcbuyer.com, and since it was marked as in stock he snapped it up straight away.

After receiving a confirmation email, he thought his goods would be on the way, but this wasn't the case. After about eight emails sent to different departments, all of which have been unanswered, and five phone calls (again all unanswered), David's had enough. "The order was placed on August 28 and the money was taken from my account on August 31, but the order's still not arrived..."

We contacted epcbuyer and a spokesperson had the following to say: "We always strive to deliver the best possible service to our customers and were disappointed to learn that one of your readers has experienced problems while attempting to purchase from us. Although we've been unable to trace the various emails detailed in Mr Johnston's letter, we understand his frustration and take his comments very seriously. With this in mind, one of our representatives has attempted to contact him to discuss the matter directly."

"We're currently experiencing unprecedented volumes of traffic on our email and telephone systems, and are in the process of reviewing our internal systems in order to cater for the growth in enquiries. This will enable us to provide our customers with an increased level of service within all departments."

We'll be watching closely to ensure that epcbuyer.com fulfils its promises and sends David his expansion slot cooler. 



THE rare and elusive NVIDIA 6800 Ultra.

decided that enough was enough and asked for a refund. Incredibly, nine months down the line, not a single one of Peter's emails

Incredibly, nine months down the line and not a single one of Peter's emails had been answered

had been answered and there wasn't a contact phone number listed on the site.

By the time Watchdog got involved, the situation had moved even further along the worrying scale. The website was no longer available, a phone number that Peter had tracked down had been disconnected, all emails were instantly bounced back, while a quick search on the Internet revealed that Peter was among at least 20 angry customers who'd also been fleeced.

We quickly passed the details onto Consumer Direct – a subsidiary of the Department of Trade & Industry who log

THE ACCUSED

ELITE PC SYSTEMS

epcbuyer
online computer supplies

Guilty until proven innocent



SAINTS NOT SINNERS

Fastek UK

Reader Ed Ashton was so desperate to get his hands on the Gigabyte 6600GT on Fastek's website, that when he ordered it, he agreed to stump up an extra tenner to get it delivered the next day. Soon after, the company called stating that it'd got the delivery price wrong and he'd only have to fork out five pounds instead. "So the helpful, friendly guy said he'd put a fiver in with my order." Sure enough, the next day Ed's card arrived with a five pound note snuggled up in the packaging. Hurrah for Fastek!

Meanwhile, Jaspah thought he was getting a bargain when he bought an AGP X800Pro on ebay, but it was dead upon arrival. He tried to get his money back for eight months, but



in the end, was just left with a worthless broken card. In a last-ditch attempt, he emailed the manufacturer Sapphire, who, to his surprise, offered to replace it for a measly £15. Feeling a bit cheeky, Jaspah pushed his luck and asked if it could replace it with a PCI-E X800XL. Amazingly, Sapphire agreed and "replaced a dodder, hot, slow and not to mention Pro with a flashy, new, nearly-top-of-the-range XL in PCI-E flavour" in a mere three days. All hail Sapphire, king of generosity!

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PCZONE

FREEPLAY

Got no money? No worries...

DISC EDITOR Suzy Wallace

WHAT'S FREE THIS MONTH

FREE
GAMES!

Tequila Sunrise

THIS MONTH STARTED off very happily for me, as I finally jetted off on a well-deserved break to the Caribbean coast of Mexico. Well, I say happy, and it certainly was for the first eight days as I sat in the sun wearing a stupid sombrero, drinking free tequila and generally having a fantastic time.

Only then tropical storm Stan decided to, quite literally, rain on my parade for five entire days. When you're in a location where the main activities are based around sunshine but the only thing the sky's producing is big, fat globules of rain, then things can get a little boring.

Luckily, I'd taken a laptop with me, but it's hardly an Alienware, struggling to even spell DirectX, let alone run my favourite games. So, I was reduced to playing Solitaire for five whole days. That's the equivalent of Chinese water torture for a games journalist. Luckily, things were looking much better back in England, with a jam-packed Freeplay section awaiting my return. But don't just take my word for it - enjoy amigos!

P.J.'s King Kong
and more...

110 Demo Pages

Your first port of call for free games!

THERE'S No More Room
In Hell. Be warned.

112 Buzz

News and culture from a
world of free PC gamingSECOND Life:
sandbox MMOG.

116 Freeware

The best darn free
games on t'InternetDEFENCE Alliance 2:
UT2004 mayhem.

118 Play!

Essential reviews of the latest
mods, maps and add-onsPLAY to your
PES potential.126 Make the
most of PES 5

Score big with our top tips

THEY don't make 'em
like this anymore...130 MAME
Feature

The regeneration game



Try this!

Throw a man about for
tribute in *Black & White 2*

On the fourth land near where you begin, you'll find a path. Follow this down to find a man in a cave, then throw him as far as you can to get tribute points. Break your record and you'll get even more. This isn't a quest and won't show up anywhere else.

PCZONE
FREE-O-METER0
HOURS

Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month

174.3
HOURS*

FREEPLAYDEMOS

Demos

On the DVD – free games galore!

22
PLAYABLE
DEMOS
ON THE DVD!



DISC TROUBLES?

Having problems getting something off our DVD to work? Phone our helpline on **01225 442244** and ask for cover-disc support. Alternatively, email **support@futurenet.co.uk**, including as much information as possible about your system and the nature of your problem.



CALL OF DUTY 2

The king of WWII shooters returns with more frenetic action

www.callofduty.com/cod2/ | ETA: Out now



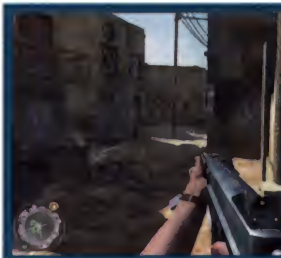
EVERY ONCE IN a while a game comes out that takes the genre and turns it on its head. When it came to WWII shooters, *Call Of Duty* was that title. The ex-*Medal Of Honor* staff managed to create a superbly gritty and intense experience that completely redefined the WWII FPS as we knew it. But that was then; two years on, we can proudly present this

demo of the mammoth sequel. Featuring the El Daba mission in Egypt from the British campaign, you'll once again be thrown back into the heart of the action as you try to wrestle back control of the town from the Germans. Can it really be as good as our review says (p48)? Will you enjoy the sequel just as much? Is grey the new black? Install this to find out.



PINNED DOWN

You've made it this far, but now you're pinned down. A German machine gun nest is mowing down soldiers left and right but making a break for the only cover will mean straying out into that line of fire.



PICK YOUR SPOT

Pinpoint a good middle spot between yourself and the machine gun nest. Remember, don't do it too close to yourself or when the smoke starts billowing, you won't be able to see what you're doing.

UP IN SMOKE Get up close and personal with the handy use of a smoke grenade



THERE SHE BLOWS

A couple of seconds after the grenade hits, the smoke will start spewing out. Give it a few seconds until the cloud looks like suitable cover then make a run for it and flank those Nazis!



STAY ON TARGET

To lob a smoke grenade, you'll have to press the 4 key instead of the normal grenade button. Make sure you adjust your aim beforehand to compensate for length and height.



DOW – WINTER ASSAULT

The Winter sun rises on Relic's combat-heavy RTS expansion

www.dawnofwargame.com | ETA: Out now

STOMPY ROBOTS, STUPIDLY oversized weapons and plenty of gore: *Dawn Of War's* always featured our perfect choice of ingredients. The expansion *Winter Assault* features more of the same violent goodness, but adds the Imperial Guard and a whole host of other new units to the mix. This demo offers a chance to test the mettle of the new boys with the entire Imperial Guard under your command – you can even boss about a few Eldar troops as well.

Fast And The Furious

Two new vehicles for your gun-toting pleasure



Fast

The Sentinel is an anti-vehicle unit featuring light armour and armed with a laser. They're pretty nifty and can also 'incapacitate' the enemy's strategic points, so are best used as scouting vehicles.



Furious

The Hellhound is a more meaty state of affairs. This huge tank is equipped with a turret-mounted Inferno cannon making it perfect for burning enemies to a crisp and reducing morale while it's at it.

KING KONG

Go ape in Ubisoft's action-shooter hybrid

www.kingkonggame.com | ETA: November 17

WHAT'S THAT YOU say? You can play as a huge monkey? Swing from vines, bash dinosaurs around and throw your own poo at passers-by (well, maybe not the last one). Thank god Ubisoft and Peter Jackson have clubbed together to bring us a rare gem among movie-to-game conversions.

The demo offers two distinctly separate levels: the first plays as a shooter from the perspective of one of the puny humans, while the second features some cinematic action as you direct the mighty Kong himself. So stop monkeying around and get installing now!

King Don

Kong's got a few moves up his hairy sleeves to rid the world of these dinosaurs...



Death From Above

Jump onto the surrounding vines or the first fight's raised platform and utilise the extra height to bring you crashing down on the back of one of the scaly beasts.



Branching Out

When you land on the platform with the smaller dinosaurs, take a look around. See that branch? Grab it and swing with all your might to take them down in record time.

JURASSIC PERKS

Stalling for T-Rex time



1 This scaly-hided fella's already munched a few of your crew. As the only person with a gun, it's your job to keep him distracted.

2 There are two Pterodactyls flying about the area. They don't prove much of a threat, but gun them down to provide some fast food for the T-Rex.

3 You need to keep the T-Rex away from your buddies. If he gets too close, they'll become dino dinner.

4 Once you've attracted the T-Rex's attention, hide behind this arch as you can dive through the middle as well as round the edges.

LAND OF THE DEAD: ROAD TO FIDDLER'S GREEN

www.fileshack.com/file.x?fid=7824



Join the slightly disorienting tale and start an undead army, join the souls, blasting some zombie hordes and stomping on some zombies too. It's the only language the undead understand in this demo of *Land of the Dead*.

UFO: AFTERSHOCK

www.ufo-aftershock.com/pages/download.html



Play through three whole levels of the sci-fi strategy sim *UFO: Aftershock* and stop those damn dirty alien from destroying the world. And cookies, donut, cattle or Douglas, ticks – whatever your extraterrestrial tastes, we've got 'em.

THE BEST OF THE REST



SERIOUS SAM 2

Obviously conceived while under the influence of copious amounts of LSD, this demo features some crazy *Serious Sam* action as you rampage your way through the Seriousopolis Uptown and Greendale levels.

www.serioussam2.com



BET ON SOLDIER (MULTIPLAYER)

If you fancy shooting the hell out of your friends for money, then load up this multiplayer demo. You should already be familiar with the Cargo Bay map from last month, which you can play with or without exoskeletons.

www.betonsoldier.com



WORLD RACING 2

Feeling a bit like a mini advertisement for Volkswagen, this driving demo allows you to take the wheel of an old-school Golf GTI, an off-road Thruar or a speedy R32 round three tracks. Courses range from off-road challenges to high-speed tracks.

www.playlogogames.com



SNIPER ELITE

Envy of the snaky sniper class in *God of War 2* or *John Woo* will feel right at home with this demo from Ubisoft. With plenty of hiding spots and lefty shooting points to take advantage of, there's plenty of target practice to be had as you sneak around disguised as a Russian in the Berlin hotel.

www.ubisoft.com

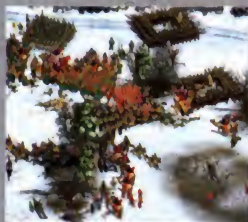
PCZONE
HOT
DOWNLOADS

SNIPPETS



GRAND THOMPSON AUTO

It's been another busy month for Jack Thompson. As well as offering \$10K to produce his own sick game, he's also been moonlighting as Banman - his sick criminal vigilante alter ego. Not in real life you understand (although that may only be a matter of time) but in *Defamation Of Character* - a GTA: San Andreas mod featuring JT as the main character. <http://hellfish.gtajunkies.com/Jt.html>



BACK TO THE FUTURE - ON THE DISC!

If Napoleonic warfare's your thing (and let's face it, who's not into watching thousands of men charge needlessly to their death), then you'll be grinning more than a Cheshire cat with this *Mini Cossacks 2* expansion from GSC Game World that features three additional skirmish maps and one historical battle. www.cossacks2.de

SCARY MOVIE

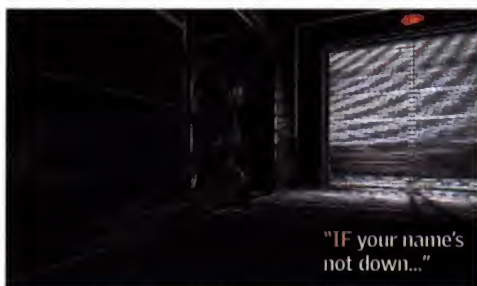
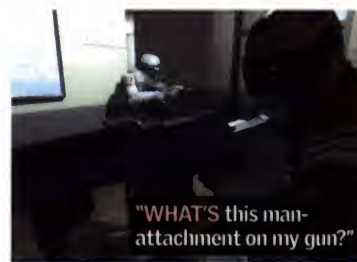
panics.roosterteeth.com

Red Vs Blue creator puts the F.E.A.R. of God into you

ANY SELF-RESPECTING machinima fan will instantly know of the Rooster Teeth crew from their highly successful series *Red Vs Blue*. For those still on 56k, *Red Vs Blue* follows the stories of two rival squads in *Halo* whose level of incompetence exceeds even that of your average PC Superstore employee.

Somehow, between *Red Vs Blue* and its other series *The Strangerhood*, Rooster Teeth has found time to release new series *P.A.N.I.C.S.* (People Acting Normal in Crazy-Ass Situations) which is filmed entirely using the *F.E.A.R.* engine. With

only five episodes in total (and a bonus one on the Director's Cut DVD of *F.E.A.R.*), it might not have the longevity of *Red Vs Blue*, but it does manage to elicit plenty of chuckles out of a game that's designed to do just the opposite. Check it out!



WIN! PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5

Ten copies of the game plus official Piggyback guide to be won!

LORDY, LORDY, CRIPES alive - we love *Pro Evolution Soccer 5*. In fact **PC ZONE** adores it so much, we're thinking of constructing a giant paper clip sculpture of the game's producer Shingo 'Seabass' Takatsuka, and giving ourselves all fish-themed nicknames in his honour. And no wonder - Konami's arcade footie knockabout gained 93 per cent and a **PC ZONE** Classic award last issue, with its beautiful mix of slick arcade action and intuitive controls, and single and multiplayer online options.

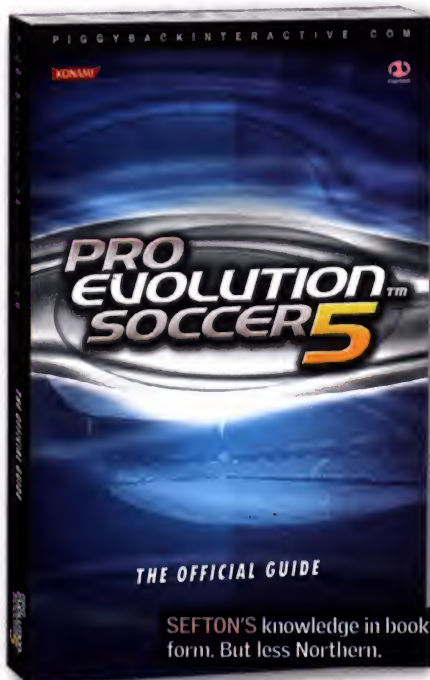
However, not only are we offering you the chance to win the game, the generous bods at Piggyback have given us ten copies of the 222-page official guide to *Pro Evolution Soccer 5* worth £10.99 (available in all videogame retail outlets now, people). The guide covers everything on how to play *PES5*, including team management, coaching, the extensive Master League



(basically a cut-down *Football Manager*), team and player info and a heap of killer tips that'll turn any Conference gamer into a Premiership genius. If you want to investigate further, sample pages are available to download at www.piggybackinteractive.com. To win a copy of *PES5* and the Piggyback player's guide, simply answer the following question:

What are the two officially licensed Premiership football clubs available in *Pro Evolution 5*?

Send your entries on a postcard or the back of an envelope to *PES5* compo, **PC ZONE**, Future Publishing, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP. Make sure you get your entries to us by December 7, 2005. Any received after this date will be used to feed and clothe the children of the world.



BEHIND THE FAÇADE

PC ZONE talks to Andrew Stern, one half of the team that brought us *Faça* – the interactive relationship simulator

PCZ What were you doing before starting on *Faça*?

AS I'd previously spent several years as a designer and AI programmer on *Dogz*, *Catz* and *Babyz*, while my collaborator, Michael Mateas, had just started his PhD with the pioneering Oz Project at Carnegie Mellon University, which focuses on AI and art/entertainment.

PCZ What was the inspiration behind *Faça*?

AS We really wanted to see what it would feel like to play a true 'interactive drama' – where you can say anything you want at any time. The story is small and intimate with lots of nuances and variation, and the interaction feels natural. We're both pretty fed up with today's games, which are so often about saving the world, usually violent or juvenile,

and often just too much work to play. We were dying for something fresh and new, that would appeal to more people than just gamers.

PCZ How long did *Faça* take to complete?

AS The whole thing was about three years of work, spread out over a five-year period. Everything was



programmed, written and animated from scratch.

PCZ So how does it work (in simple terms please!)?

AS In a nutshell, we had to break down the drama of a marriage falling apart into many, many small pieces of content, intermixable with each other, where each piece of content is its own little 'story machine' made up of a collection of behaviours. This enables each individual part of the drama (what we call a 'beat') to be smart enough to do the right thing, no matter when the player causes it to occur. By doing so, the player now has the freedom to make almost anything happen at almost any time, and the overall story will still be understandable and coherent.

PCZ Have any companies approached you about utilising the technology in their products?

AS Yes, we're talking to several game companies about using the technology to enhance their existing games, and to create new types of games altogether. In fact, we're looking to raise funds to develop our games within our newly formed studio, Procedural Arts.

PCZ What's the feedback been like from the gaming industry?

AS It ranges; some developers and gamers are wildly enthusiastic, some are



just happy that this experimentation is going on. And naturally some are disappointed – primarily gamers that are frustrated with *Faça*'s flaws and unable to see its potential. But a lot of folks are taking notice; we've had nearly 200,000 downloads since it was released four months ago.

PCZ What do you think of storytelling in current-generation games?

AS Not much. Seriously, I'm very disappointed with how little progress has been made in interactive story over the last few decades. Cut-scenes, while often gorgeous, make me cringe – they totally break any feeling that I'm in control of the story. Even the more open-ended worlds have a very fragmented narrative, or a mostly linear narrative overall where players don't really have much affect on the plot.

PCZ How important do you think character interaction will become in games?

AS There will always be awesome games that don't require characters any deeper than they are today, and that's fine. But if we want to expand the reach of games, as well as the types of people playing games, intelligent characters will be crucial. Because games will never reach the same level of mass appeal and cultural impact as television, movies, books and theatre until they have richer, deeper characters.

SNIPPETS



KUNG-POW COKE

Coca-Cola is jumping on the MMORPG bandwagon with a brand-new Far Eastern advert. Joining the ranks of famous Coke promoters are SHE, an all-girl pop sensation from China who utilise some fantastic visuals from *WOW* to teach their sleazy manager a thing or two. www.worldofwarcraft.com/downloads/movies.html



STAR WARS MOVIES

If you're a fan of *KOTOR II* despite its low-res movies, you'll be happy to know that NVIDIA's teamed up with Obsidian Entertainment to bring you an unofficial patch that updates all of the in-game movies with gorgeous hi-res versions. May the Force be with them. www.nzone.com/object/nzone_kotor2_downloads.html

Bug-Fix of the Month

THIS MONTH: THE SIMS 2 NIGHTLIFE



Patch v1.2.0.337 fixes a bug so that: "Sims that are seated in a car will no longer stand up inside the car to change clothes."

Movie of the Month

GUN

It's been a long old while since the PC's played host to a decent Wild West game, so we've got high hopes for Neversoft's view of the fledgling land of the free. Will the jump from sliding skate ramps to swinging saloon doors be a smooth one?

BEAR: The Kazakhstan tradition of 'shoot the bear' was popular in the Wild West too.

GUN FIGHTS: Wield your piece in some crazy first-person battles of the bullet.

INDIANS: Awwwww. All that scalping must have given them a headache.

IN THE SADDLE: Take down enemies' mounts and shoot from horseback yourself.



PC ON MY PSP PLEASE

www.google.com

Play free old PC games on your expensive new handheld



LOOK! PC on PSP!

AFTER A BRIEF cry over a forlorn-looking bank statement, you unwrap your shiny new PSP. What do you want to play first, *Virtua Tennis*? A bit of

Burnout perhaps? Nah, you want to get some *Monkey Island* on there – and we know how to do it (and we strongly disapprove, for the record). Sony does not condone tinkering with your PSP, and while it's not quite illegal, nobody else can be held responsible for any damages incurred (especially not us).

As the latest 2.0 firmware is a bit of a killjoy, you'll need an unofficial downgrader (MPHDowngrader.zip) and a now defunct official 1.50 upgrader (EBOOT_1.50.zip) to prime your PSP for emulators. The procedures that follow are too complex to detail here, so snoop

around online for a guide. When you're all set, hunt down the PSP version of ScummVM (psp-news.dcmu.co.uk/scummvm/psp.shtml) and get it installed. Once you've done that, stick your favourite Scumm games on your PSP and start playing some *Sam & Max* on the bus – the world is your point-and-click oyster.

But wait, there's more! A quick non-PC search of Google turns up QuakePSP, an almost fully-working port of the classic shooter. Again, you'll need to be using a downgraded PSP if you want to shoot bad guys in their low-poly faces. Once again the joys of PC gaming trample on filthy console platforms! They would be nothing without us!

No More Room In Hell

www.nomoreroominhell.com

Try the B&B down the road instead

ROMERO ONCE SAID that when there was no more room in hell, the dead would either walk the earth or god would start sub-letting heaven at extortionate rates. The former has inspired countless great games and mods, one of which is the upcoming *Half-Life 2* mod, *No More Room In Hell*.

Sticking rigidly to the notion demonstrated by other mods such as

Killing Floor (issue 161) that zombies are terrifying and must be gruesomely eradicated, *No More Room In Hell* promises intense co-op gameplay involving decapitating the shambling corpses and transporting the fetid remains to a great big bonfire, before burning them beyond recognition. This mod looks set to do old Mr Of-The-Dead proud.



PENTHOUSE will set you back a cool 300K.



WHAT could happen next?



OH, I haven't seen that.



CAPTAIN'S LOG

Borg Wars to the rescue...

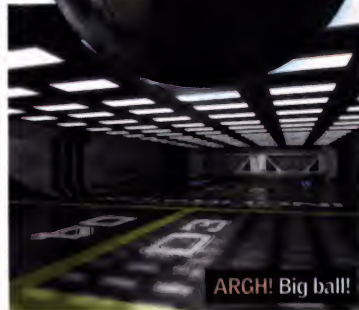
borgwars.hlgaming.com



OH corridor of doom...



SET phasers to 'fun'.



ARGH! Big ball!

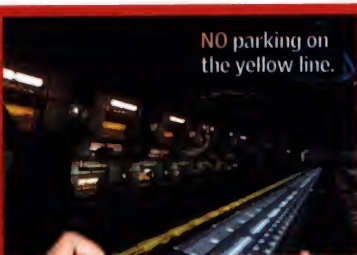
STAR TREK FANS have long been denied a decent first-person shooter. *Elite Force 2* smelled faintly of excrement, and certainly didn't do justice to the monumental following the sci-fi series has garnered over the years. So it's left up to the fans themselves to stop debating whether Kirk would kick Picard's arse in a fight (he definitely would, if you're wondering) and get cracking on

developing their own *Star Trek* mod, *Borg Wars*, complete with Borg, holodecks, little communication badges and phasers set to kill.

Borg Wars is far from completion, but with a team of dedicated nerds at the helm and the promise of full single- and multiplayer modes, it looks to be best thing since Jean-Luc became Locutus of Borg and had a laser-pen strapped onto his face. Happy days.



COCONUT effect purely accidental.



NO parking on the yellow line.

Doomed again

Mars ain't the kinda place to raise your kids

www.doomworld.com/unholy/future

DEMONS ARE A relentless bunch: having been thoroughly humiliated on Mars and having had their precious portal sealed, they've decided to try their luck on Phobos instead, in a *Doom 3* map-pack aptly titled Phobos. Astronomers, historians and *Doom* fans alike will recognise Phobos as being the Martian moon where hell's minions emerged from their fiery pits of torture in an attempt to enslave and murder mankind, and generally act like twats. So, what better place to set at least 18 more levels than where it all kicked off back in 1993.

Developer Team Future is touting some lofty objectives, promising more open-ended level design to oppose *Doom's* characteristic

corridors, new monsters to blast back to the fiery place and a new situational soundtrack that plays in key with the action (a bit violent, or very violent).

The team also plans to expand the *Doom* universe by introducing the Federal Commonwealth of Earth, a new faction to oppose the UAC conglomerate.

Mods and map-packs generally aren't known for their storytelling abilities, and usually any attempt to do so comes across as amateurish and low budget (probably because they are, by definition, amateurs without a budget). To be honest, we've no reason to believe this will be any different, but if ever there was time and a place for it to be done right, it's here and it's now.

NOT HALO, HONEST

What's a Halo anyway?

www.incoming-source.net

THE DEVELOPER OF

Incoming Source, a budding futuristic sci-fi tactical *Half-Life 2* mod with dinosaurs (yes, dinosaurs), is quite eager to point out that "this is not a *Halo* mod". Sure, there's the player model that looks surprisingly like the Master Chief, and a vehicle which looks identical to the Warthog. And yes, the developer has blatantly called it the Warthog, but that's where the similarities end.

Playing as either the humans, who use ballistics-based weapons, or the Covenant... Altair, who use plasma-based weapons, you must do battle on distant planets in classic deathmatch style. Adding some wandering AI dinosaurs to the mod to prevent it looking entirely like a *Halo* clone could be a stroke of genius, and one that would make this mod something special, but it's going to be a tough task for the plucky modders. We wish them well.



WE love spikey trees.

SO, YOU WANT TO BE A...

Freelance Games Journalist

NAME Sam Kielsen

WORKING ON

PC ZONE, *T3* and other publications

AGE 26

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

Games and digital journalist

PCZ How did you get started?

SK I was working full-time on *PC Strategy Games*, and when that folded, I pestered *PC ZONE's* then-reviews ed Martin Korda, sending samples of my work until he sent me some games...

PCZ What's the pay like?

SK Nobody ever got rich writing about games. But I do it for the love, man.

PCZ What does your job involve?

SK I'll get a call from Sefton or Prezzer asking if I'm interested in doing some writing. The next day a jiffy bag packed with gaming goodness plops onto my doormat. I then sit at my PC and write. And no, I don't generally work in my underwear.

PCZ How rewarding is your job?

SK Very. I get paid to play games and write about them. I also get to go abroad, stay in swanky hotels and gorge myself on free food and drink.

PCZ What's the most annoying part of the job?

SK Dragging myself out of bed at 10 every morning. It's a hard life.

WE SAY... DIY

If you'd like to join the ranks of Sam, Steve Hill and others, first off you need to write as much as you can, whether it's for a school or local newspaper or a website. Once you think you're ready, send your best bits into gaming mags and websites and keep on sending! Work experience is also a great way to get your foot in the door - just look at Steve Hogarty...

NEXT MONTH
SYWTBA... Games scriptwriter



Freeware



Steve Hogarty's wallet is emptier than Kate Moss's inbox...

Freeware is dedicated to bringing you the best free games, content the Net has to offer, be it freeware, homebrews, remakes, webgames or emulation – you'll never have to buy another game again. This month you can marvel at some students who actually work, and relive the glory that is *Puzzle Bobble*...



ROUTE960

We're on a road to nowhere

Developer: Mass -c- #960, unden, jpen

"This bit here makes the car go forwards and this thing here makes it stop again, all the roads are straight so don't worry about steering, here's your licence, bye!" Falling off a wall is about as difficult as learning to drive in *Route960* – you only need two buttons and a lot of patience. The objective is to drive to the end of the track without launching your car over a hill too fast and having it smash to pieces on the other side, and without going so slow that your car rolls back down the steep hills. It's harder than it sounds, but you'll want to keep trying until you get it right.



SECOND LIFE

More excuses not to go out...

Developer: Linden Lab | www.secondlife.com

IF YOU'RE NOT happy with your current life and prefer to live in relative anonymity on the Internet (perhaps being grotesquely ugly or smelling like the inside of a hairdryer), you may have already discovered *Second Life*, the massively multiplayer online world which we can't really sum up by the end of this sentence. We'll need another paragraph.

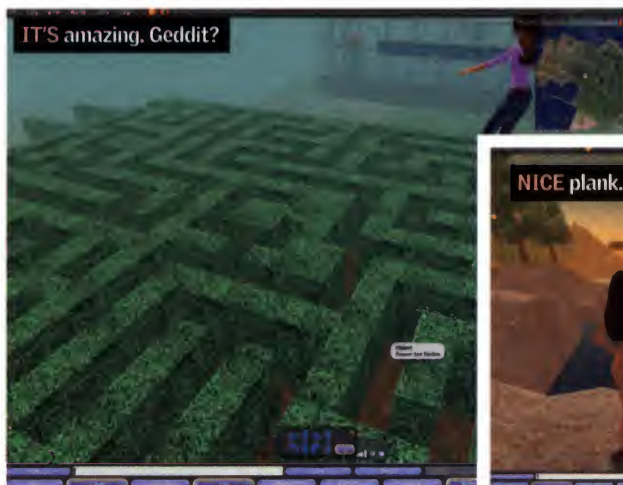
Second Life isn't an RPG in the typical sense – there are no skill trees or mythical quests, no killing rats or looting corpses. What it is however, is a world built and

**FREEWARE
GAME
OF THE
MONTH**

maintained by its players. Providing you with an extensive array of tools, the game enables you to build and design pretty much anything you like and place it in the game world. You can construct entire buildings or tiny toy trains, you can design working aeroplanes or just sculpt some post-modern art. And in its most basic form, it's free.

OK, so the best thing we could invent was a plank you could wear on your head (we called it the HeadPlank™ and due to actual legal laws, it's now our intellectual property). However, if you're the sort of person who will gladly devote your life to learning the ins and outs of the intricate scripting language and how to create something a bit more complex than a long piece of wood, there's an almost infinite amount of

scope for creativity in *Second Life*. You can even upload music and video to stream however you please too, meaning you can build discos and cinemas or radios and televisions. As for us, we're working on the HeadPlank™ Nano – 1,000 songs, one plank, in virtual stores soon.



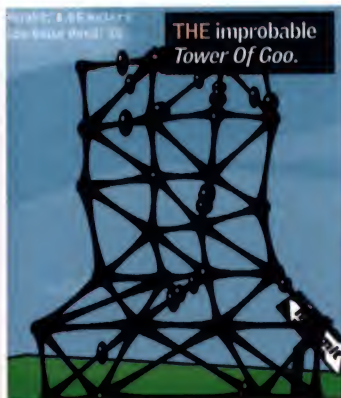


FREEPLAYFREEWARE

EXPERIMENTAL GAMEPLAY PROJECT

A bunch of college students start experimenting...

Developer: Various | www.experimentalgameplay.com



THE improbable Tower Of Goo.

ONE OF THE founding tenets of creating an enjoyable game is that complexity isn't necessary for fun. That's why lying on the couch watching *South Park* and scratching your arse is just as enjoyable as listening to Vivaldi while enjoying a five-course meal prepared by a real chef



IT'S a tree made of hands, can't you tell?

(and not those fake ones you see on TV). Realising this, the Experimental Gameplay Project decided to create a raft of games based on the premise that it's possible to have fun given only compelling interactivity and a simple goal.

The project abides by a few rules: each game must be based around a single 'gimmick', developed entirely by a single person and in less than a week. The result is a bucketload of addictive mini-games which threaten to turn your working day into a vicious cycle of procrastination until you're fired and are forced to live on the street, licking shop windows for sustenance.

Take *Gravity Head* for example – where you control a guy with a massive head who must use his noggin's gravitational field to grow some roses and deliver them to his balcony-bound love. Or *Tower Of Goo*, which presents you with the challenge of building the tallest structure possible out of blobs of goo. The taller you build, the more the tower sways worryingly from side to side as you desperately try to balance it. *Attack Of The Killer Swarm*, meanwhile, puts you in control of a mysterious black swarm



above a crowd of innocents. Left-clicking moves the swarm about in beautiful physics-based arcs and spirals, and sending the deadly swarm through the crowd launches people high into the air in a flurry of blood and screams.

Presented with beautiful artistic style and complemented by some great musical scores, the products of the Experimental Gameplay Project deserve to be checked out by anybody who enjoys fun. That's you.

WANTON DESTRUCTION

A blast from the past

Developer: Sunstorm
www.fileshack.com/file.x?fid=7633

MANKIND IS CONSTANTLY snatching random pieces of crap from the withered, bony old hands of Father Time – dinosaur fossils, bits of Romans, a few pyramids – but we can say without hyperbole that this find is arguably the most important archaeological discovery that the human race has ever witnessed.

When Anthony Campiti, the former president of Sunstorm, sat down in his favourite armchair one Monday evening he felt a short, sharp pain in his back. A team of doctors confirmed it could be only one thing – he'd sat on the last remaining copy of the unreleased *Wanton Destruction* – the long-lost add-



on pack for 3DRealms' *Shadow Warrior*, which had "been lost for like, ages".

A few excited phone calls later and 3DRealms has released *Wanton Destruction* completely free of charge. Of course, you'll need to own an original copy of *Shadow Warrior* (which 3DRealms has subsequently reduced to \$10), but it's worth it if you want to play the game that time refused to forget.



"YOU will have split personality! Ha ha!"



"STICKY bombly liky you."

WEBGAME OF THE MONTH

Puzzle Bobble



Developer: Taito
www.ventoline.com/frozenbubble/bustamove640.html
Puzzle Bobble was invented circa the year 642 on a particularly sunny Tuesday afternoon by a pair of Himalayan monks who, after observing the fact that three connecting bubbles launched into the air by a pair of little green dragons will pop, decided it would make an extremely addictive arcade game. Back then, they called it *Super Monk Ball 2*, and it was played using a pound coin, an elastic band and a chubby lad named Pete. These days, we call it *Puzzle Bobble* and we don't need the elastic band any more.

Continue the timeless bubble-bursting tradition with this fresh port of wile amounts to 2002's favourite ever puzzle, and give a thanks to developer Taito who now results in a delicious state in *Shadow Warrior* belly.

VALVE has allegedly bought shares in Ray-Ban.



CHOPPER
a' splode!

HALF-LIFE 2: LOST COAST

Steve Hogarty steps out of the darkness

www.steampowered.com



THEN GOD SAID, "Let there be light", and there was. And god saw that it was good. And he divided the light from the darkness. When god wrote the bible all those years ago, he wasn't modest about possibly his finest creation after man and Coco Pops – light.

In the industry's perpetual quest for photo-realism in games, *Lost Coast's* interpretation of light is the next logical rung on the graphical ladder. Using never before seen levels of lighting effects, Gabe Newell and his band of merry men designed this

map for *Half-Life 2*, to showcase their new HDR (High Dynamic Range) technology. Through a series of commentary nodes dotted about the map, the guys talk you through the exact science behind lighting the in-game world, and ramble on about game design ideas, how certain aspects of the map came to be and generally interesting points about the map's gameplay.

THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

So is it worth the download? Well it's free, so of course it is. But if you're looking for

more action, you might be disappointed – the map can be completed in less than ten minutes, and aside from a few combine soldiers, it doesn't offer anything new in terms of gameplay.

Instead, *Lost Coast* is really just a vehicle for showcasing Valve's fancy new lighting techniques; it's a tech demo. That's not to say you shouldn't take a look, as the HDR effects are astounding (even if they seem a little over-the-top at times), and will no doubt become standard (in some form) over the next decade. Indeed, a bit of research will reveal that true HDR monitors are already in development, meaning future games could literally blind you with brighter than white pixels and ultra-high contrast ratios.

Bleary-eyed graphical effects aside, Valve is also showing off its new commentary system, which it plans to implement into future releases. Wandering around the *Lost Coast* you'll see floating speech bubbles, which when activated prompt a developer, an artist, a designer, a janitor, or some other Valve employee into giving a short spiel usually regarding something nearby. Granted, the Valve chaps don't have the charisma of *HL2's* characters, but it makes for some interesting listening. And besides, we need something to tide us over until *Aftermath*.



THE light!
She burns!



FREEPLAYPLAY!

DEFENCE ALLIANCE 2

In the future, guns will be big and noisy www.planetunreal.com/da

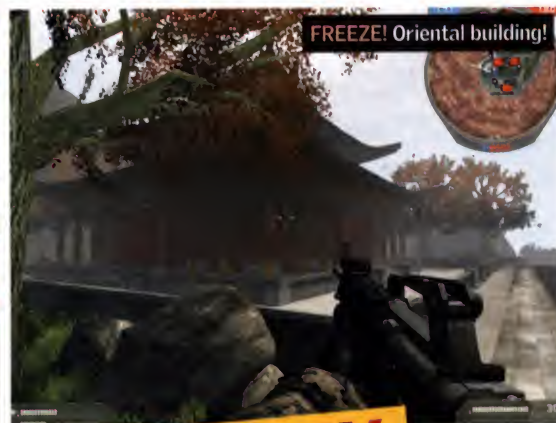
YOU TAKE ONE down, you pass it around, probably 50 or so generic futuristic sci-fi mods for *UT2k4* on the virtual wall that is the Internet. So goes the old rhyme, reminding us that while the futuristic shooter genre is as tired as a tranquillized pensioner, there are still a few rare gems in among the reams of sci-fi tripe. *Unreal Tournament* was one of those gems, and *Defence Alliance 2* is hidden inside it.

Containing seven maps ranging from large, open arenas to small, tight corridors; six classes each

with unique weapon loadouts and gameplay reminiscent of the original game's Assault mode, *Defence Alliance 2* is the most action-packed *UT2k4* mod we've seen for some time.

With well crafted maps, balanced for both the defending and attacking teams, that are populated with turrets and other points to defend, the gameplay is based in *UT2k4*'s Assault mode. It's a more intense game than the original, with guns blazing in every direction at all times and conflicts channelled into certain flashpoints on the map. The sound is fantastic as well, creating a professional atmosphere which belies the mod's origins.

At just over 100MB, *Defence Alliance 2* is a whole lot of great gameplay for a small download – by all means take it down and pass it around.



www.totalbf2.com/forums/showthread.php?t=28771

TOTAL BF2 MAP PACK

Bring the battle to you with this *BF2* map pack

LONG-DISTANCE SNIPING, close urban fighting, jungle combat and desert warfare – however you prefer to fight, you're bound to find something to suit your tastes in *Total BF2*'s map pack.

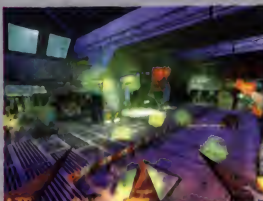
Comprising of six maps, once you've found a server (maps are multiplayer only – check out the website for server details), you can kick things off with a treat for

fans of the series: a faithful recreation of Wake Island from *BF1942*.

King Of The Hill is a sprawling map with a particularly awkward capture point at its centre, which will have teams battling for control of this bottleneck, while Mekong River's dense undergrowth makes for some great sneaking moments before launching into fully-fledged jungle

warfare. Attack At Taiming, our personal favourite, features narrow waterways that lead to some tight urban areas, making for lots of tense fighting as you stalk your way through the narrow alleys. Uluwatu City features lots of open land with one capture point positioned on its own island, while Smyrna's a sprawling city level, which judging by the burning vehicles, is in need of some more police funding. All six maps are well worth checking out, so if you can't get enough of *BF2*, get loading.

PCZONE TOP 5 HALF-LIFE MODS



1 NATURAL SELECTION

We just can't get enough of the fantastic marines vs aliens gameplay in this innovative and unique multiplayer mod.

2 TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC

Brilliantly balanced classes and diverse game modes made teamplay essential in this classic multiplayer mod.

3 THE SPECIALISTS

The closest thing to starring in an action movie, this brilliant multiplayer mod features kung fu, bullet time, stunts and more.

4 FIREARMS

This team-based multiplayer mod introduced stamina, bleeding, broken legs, realistic weapons and more innovative details to the *Half-Life* world.

5 SVEN CO-OP

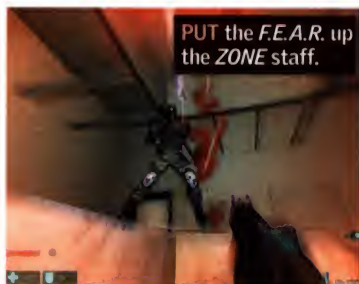
Add a friend to the mix with this mod. It allows you to play both custom and original *Half-Life* maps co-operatively with a buddy.

Fight Club



First Fight Club rule: If there's a PCZ_ in the name, shoot to kill

COME AND TAKE ON THE ZONE STAFF IN OUR MONTHLY ONLINE GAMING FREE-FOR-ALL!



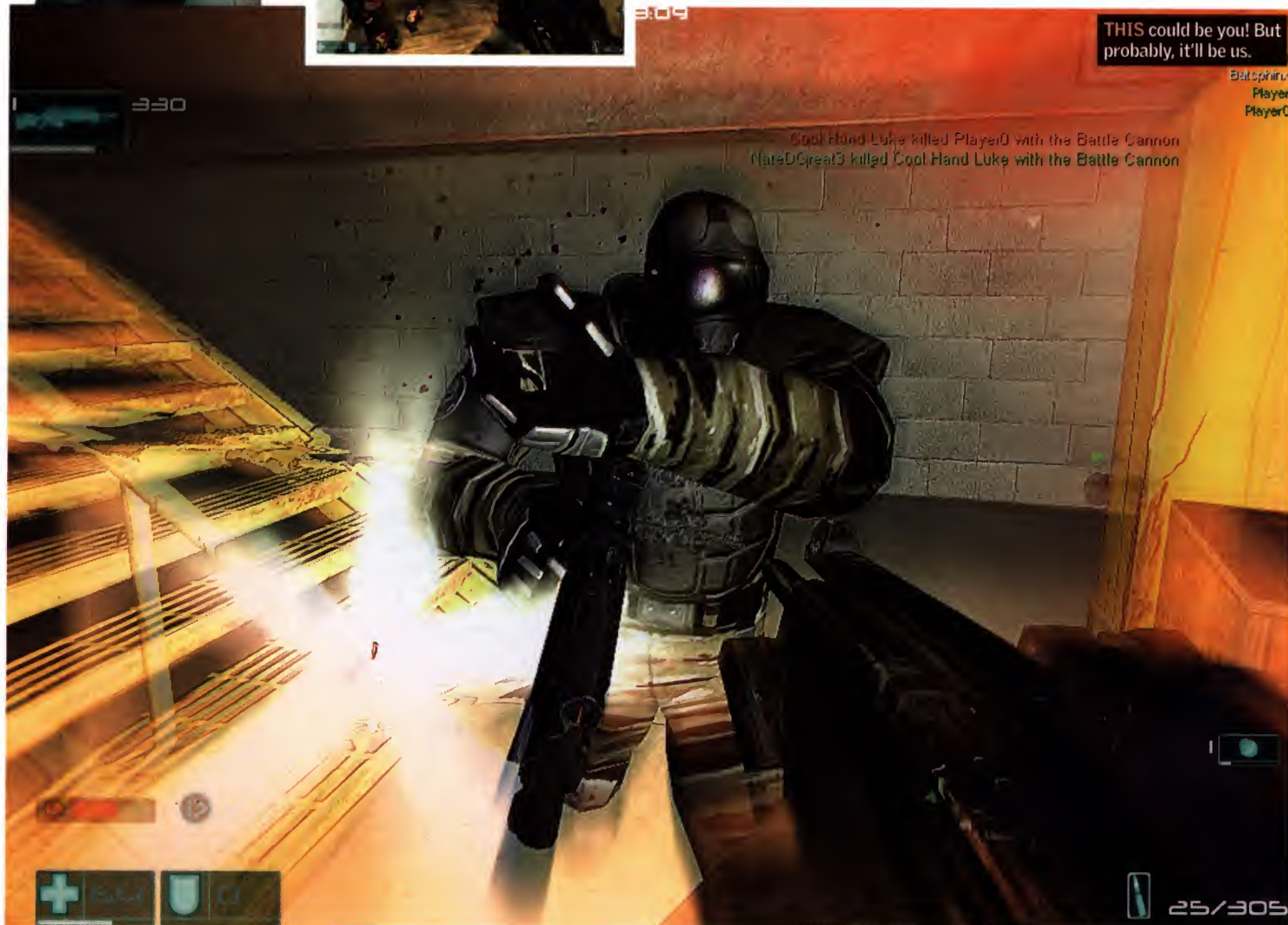
A H, FIGHT CLUB! What better way is there to spend these ever more wet and windy nights than to make yourself a hot mug of cocoa, huddle around a roaring fire and blow ten tons of living heck out of the nation's finest gaming writers?

Yes, Fight Club is your monthly opportunity to take on the good and the great of PC ZONE's staff at the online combat game of your, well, our choice. Our next get-together is taking place on Thursday, December 8 at 6pm, at which time we'll be revisiting the multiplayer delights of F.E.A.R.. Please note! The game may change prior to the date. To make sure you're fully up to date, visit the PC ZONE forums on

www.pczone.co.uk closer to the time to make sure of the details.

Joining us is as easy as pie. Apple or Blackberry. Simply check out the aforementioned forums or our sister site at www.zonegames.co.uk for the server address, type it into the in-game browser and there we'll be. Don't worry if the server's full. Every 30 minutes or so we reset the servers and let in a new batch of players. We want to see as many readers as possible joining in and everyone is welcome.

If you fancy taking screenshots of the night's action, choose your five best and send them to fightclub@pczone.co.uk. If we think they're good enough, you'll see them on these very pages!



ZONE CHAT

Your chance to chat with your gaming heroes. That's us, by the way...



**READ
THE FULL
TRANSCRIPT AT**
WWW.ZONEGAMES.CO.UK/

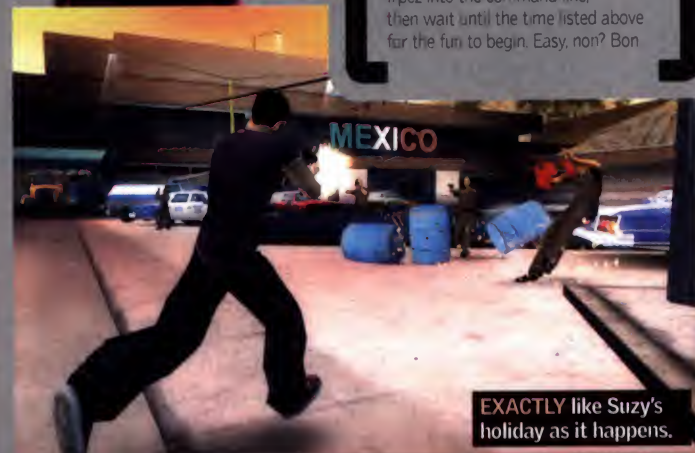
18! NO, NOT an age rating or request for Harshad numbers, but a running theme from the last **ZONE** Chat. For reasons best known to those involved at the time, spontaneous outbursts of pentagonal pyramid figures was the done thing. As was discussing Joss Whedon's *Firefly* movie extension, *Serenity*, and the continual non-appearance of **ZONE** favourite, Steve Hill (a record now spanning the sessions' entire two-and-a-half year run).

We did have a competition though, with Moby_matt winning himself a copy of Mexican *GTA*-clone *Total Overdose* and a *TO* T-shirt of ample girth.

The next **ZONE** Chat is taking place on Wednesday, December 7 at the new time of 4.30pm till 5.30pm. All the usual shenanigans will take place, along with another fabulous competition. Toodles!

How to join in!

It couldn't be simpler to take part in our monthly **ZONE** Chats if we came round to your house and spoke to you in person for an hour. All you need is an IRC program and a Net connection. The former we provide on our cover-disc (we recommend mIRC), the latter you'll have to handle yourself. Just install the program, set the options, think of an amusing online 'name' for yourself that both sums up your personality and eschews traditional spelling conventions, connect to a Quakenet server near you, type /join #pcz into the command line, then wait until the time listed above for the fun to begin. Easy, non? Bon



EXACTLY like Suzy's holiday as it happens.

FREEPLAY FIGHT CLUB

PCZONE

Readers' Challenge Hosted by Jolt Online Gaming

One month left for our spectacular prize-giving championship! Sign up to win top prizes from the sponsors below! Last month, we had a round of special games. Here are the winners...

PLANETARIUM

WINNER 1ST Juho 'Toot' Kostianen
2ND Pasi 'Lissu' Halio

FIFA FOOTBALL 2005

WINNER Stephen 'hamil' Hamilton
2ND Adam 'Reidy' Reid

WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR

WINNER John 'Viper' Bryce
2ND Chris 'Right' Mitchell

WARCRAFT 3: THE FROZEN THRONE

WINNER Benjamin 'Ben' Baker
2ND Martin 'PuReBall' Rome

STARCRAFT: BROOD WAR

WINNER Jamie John 'MidiaN' Hallam
2ND David '72o' Lindsay

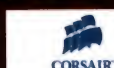
NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND 2

WINNER James 'Potts' Potts
2ND Ben 'AphexTwin' Woodward

Readers' Challenge is proudly sponsored by the following companies



The V9750 series from leading graphics card manufacturer Asus takes GeForce FX performance to a new level.



The XMS product line is Corsair's premium desktop product family and are the world's most highly awarded memory chips.



Creative's Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS soundcards and the Inspire T7700 speakers produce superior audio for gamers.



Logitech raises the bar in gaming precision and performance with the MX 510 mouse and Internet Navigator SE Keyboard.



The Western Digital Raptor is a new class of hard drive that matches SCSI reliability and performance.



A world leader in the motherboard industry, MSI's K7NP supports the latest AthlonXP and Duron processors.



Plantronics' USB headset with DSP (digital signal processing), with maximum bass response for enhanced gaming.



The home of online gaming, Jolt provides servers from basic Quake clan party to managed corporate game server solutions.

Can't make Fight Club?

Washing your hair that night? Worry not, we have the following public servers running 24/7, so drop in any time you feel like taking on a fellow **PCZ** reader - you may even catch the **ZONE** staff in there too. As always, you can find up-to-the-minute server information at www.zonegames.co.uk/

WHO'S WHO

Jamie Sefton **PCZ_NorthernScum**
Paul Presley **PCZ_Prezzer**
Will Porter **PCZ_Batsphinx**
Suzy Wallace **PCZ_Uzibat**
Jamie Malcolm **PCZ_Jimlad**
Phil Wand **PCZ_People's Front Of Judea**
Steve Hogarty **PCZ_escaped_monkey**

1 SWAT 4
swat4.zonegames.co.uk

2 COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE
cs1.zonegames.co.uk:27015
cs2.zonegames.co.uk:27025
cs3.zonegames.co.uk:27015

3 HALF-LIFE 2: DEATHMATCH
hl2.zonegames.co.uk:27065

4 DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE
dod.zonegames.co.uk:27085

5 BATTLEFIELD 1942 DC MODDED
dc.zonegames.co.uk:14567

6 TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC
tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27045

7 WOLFENSTIEN: ENEMY TERRITORY
et.zonegames.co.uk:27960

8 UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004
ut1.zonegames.co.uk:7777
ut2.zonegames.co.uk:8888

9 CALL OF DUTY
cod.zonegames.co.uk:28960

10 JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING
Listed on NovaWorld



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abandonware



Kosta Krauth's monthly focus on abandonware games and utilities

What is abandonware?

Abandonware is computer software that is no longer being sold or supported by its copyright holder, such as the classic sci-fi RPG shooter *System Shock 2*. However, game copyright is protected by law for 70 years, so even though you can't buy these games, downloading them is technically illegal. PC ZONE doesn't condone filthy criminals. Or even ones that have had a good scrub.

IN THE THIS third part of our series on DOSBox – an open-source DOS emulator for running old PC titles – we give you the lowdown on how to capture screenshots and actual sound samples from your favourite old games. By pressing CTRL+F5, you can take

screenshots which will be placed within DosBox installation dir, in a subdirectory called 'capture'. To record sound, you can use CTRL+F6 to stop and start recording into .wav format, or CTRL+ALT+F8 for capturing MIDI output. Finally, you can use ALT+ENTER to switch between

windowed and full-screen modes. Now you know, what are you waiting for? Time to get grabbing...



Ignition

DEVELOPER UDS YEAR OF RELEASE 1997

ABANDONWARE
GAME
OF THE
MONTH

5



When was the last time you sat on the floor and produced engine noises while messing about with your favourite childhood toy car? *Ignition* is a simple, fast-paced *Micro Machines*-style racer, created by now-defunct developer UDS (see below) in 1997, and it will make you

giggle like the last time you had your nappy changed (which may be last week – we don't pry into any reader's private life).

Such hilarity is achieved by a wide array of funky cars – a police car and monster truck are particular favourites – along with colourful graphics and beautiful level design, including surprise hazards such as rolling boulders and tornados. *Ignition*'s camera constantly changes as you storm through twisty

roads, cliffs, airport runways, canyons and other exotic locations, much in the vein of recent racer *Mashed*, but with a super-fast 3D engine that looks and performs as good as the vehicles. Not only that, but *Ignition*'s sound effects are perfectly tuned too – it's brilliant hearing the children cheer in delight as you ignite the nitro boost in your school bus, for example.

There's no story and little characterisation to speak of, but it doesn't matter, as with various single- and multiplayer options including split-screen, there's enough to keep you occupied for months. One of the best racing games ever, *Ignition* is now abandoned for your delight. Check out my website for more on this underrated revved-up classic: www.abandonia.com.



UDS (Unique Development Studios) was a Swedish-based company founded in 1993. It employed a couple of dozen talented programmers, almost all well known in the Scandinavian demo scene. PC games (such as *Ignition*) accounted for only a fraction of its overall productions, the console market being its main source of income. UDS grew rapidly between 1997 and 2002, during which time it launched two UK-based divisions, GlobalFun and King Of The Jungle. Various alliances were also formed with global players such as Sony, Acclaim, Eidos and Fox Interactive. Unfortunately, the company strategy didn't pay off in the long run, and it filed for bankruptcy in 2003. However, GlobalFun remains operational and produces mobile games to this day.

You can check out Kosta's abandonware website at www.abandonia.com



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Need:

A copy of PES5
An understanding of the offside rule
A PlayStation 2 pad and
USB adaptor

What you'll get:

An zen-like ability to beat any
challenger at will ✓
Knowledge of what 'middle-
shooting' means ✓
A roasting session at a less-than-
salubrious London hotel ✗

Become a master at PES 5

Look out Sven – *Jamie 'The Gaffer' Sefton* brings you the best PES5 tactics

A RECENT Pro Evolution Soccer 5 event in Sardinia brought the best players in Europe together (myself modestly included) for a tournament. While I can happily report progression from the group stage, I was unfortunately knocked out in the first round by a fluke last-minute goal from an over-enthusiastic Belgian. So that you can avoid the same shameful fate, the following guide is here to help you become a better PES player – a mix of tips I've picked up from being the reigning office champion, and from my recent interview with the game's producer Shingo 'Seabass' Takatsuka. All the tips refer to the PlayStation 2 pad controls...



01 PS2 Roolz

Forget any other plastic rubbish: the PlayStation 2 DualShock 2 controller is the only gamepad worthy of playing PES5 (if you've ever played the game on Xbox, you'll know what I mean). Buy or nick one from a younger, more defenceless member of your family and buy a PC USB-PS2 adaptor – available to buy online for about £7.

02 Role Play

Make sure you specify the job role for each player. For example, with PES's new 'middle-shooting' – the ability to let fly with lethal shots just outside the box – use players with that talent, such as Frank Lampard or

Steven Gerrard. Shots are more accurate and powerful if players connect with the ball properly with their strongest foot.

03 Good Lob

When applying a chip shot (L1 + Square) or through-ball (L1 + Triangle) – in fact any technical shot – make sure you're not dashing (holding R1). Ensure your player with the ball is in a stable position before pulling off high technical moves, or you'll give the ball away more than Owen Hargreaves.





04 No X-cess

Don't constantly press the X button (pressure) when defending – use the directional controls to guide your player's near any attackers, then at the crucial moment press X to try and snaffle the ball away from their feet. Sliding tackles (circle when defending) are extremely useful for anticipating and intercepting opposition passes – but be careful not to rake the back of a footballer's legs, or you'll probably be given an early bath.

05 Ball Trap

In *PES5*, the football bounces and bobbles more than in previous versions, meaning that trapping the ball and keeping possession is more difficult than keeping Rooney on the pitch for 90 minutes. So, when you're about to receive the ball, press the R2 button at the right time to allow a good trap.



06 Calm down dear!

Don't constantly press R1 (dash), as more often than not you'll cause niggly fouls or gift the ball to opposition players. Try to vary your speed – often stopping completely – to confuse defenders and draw tackles. You can also use R2 as a skilful way of side-stepping past opposition players, before pressing R1 to accelerate away.

08 Greatest Fan

Keep checking the best *Pro Evo* website on the Internet – www.pesfan.com. Here, you'll be able to view goals, chat with other players, ask for more tips and eventually get your hands on the unofficial *PES5* patch that will give you all the official club teams, strip and player names.

07 High Spirits

According to the game's producer Seabass: "Your spirits are very important – if you give away a goal, make sure that your head doesn't go down!" In the past, we've often accused *PES* of having a hidden 'morale system' that can affect teams like Brazil when they're losing – players misplacing passes or shooting poorly, for example. However, Seabass insists *PES5* isn't fixed in such a way: "Usually we find it's a motivational issue with players – so keep your spirits high."



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HOW TO...

Make a game

PART FOUR

Dan Marshall is beginning to feel the power...

INDIE GAME DEVELOPMENT is tough – and I'm not talking about learning to code or struggling to arrange pixels so that bullets don't look like tiny cocks. No, it's the fact that for all this work, there's no tangible reward. Zip. It doesn't pay any bills whatsoever. To do that, I have a full-time job – yes, I'm employed again! – which doesn't leave much time for new code routines.

This also means I haven't touched anyone else's videogame in months. And when you throw a hectic social life and (fortunately understanding) girlfriend into the mix, you start to understand why so many developers are socially inept, loner geek types...

HARD DAY'S NIGHT

However, burning the candle at both ends means that the main engine for my game *Gibbage* is now complete and is running smoothly. In short, here's how it works: each player has a power booth, with a ticking-down timer. When it reaches zero, you lose. To stop this from happening, you run about picking up rare power cubes and returning them to your booth. Naturally, your opponent is after these cubes as well, which is why you've been supplied with a big meaty gun. Add a few wacky power-ups, special moves and different weapons, and it turns out I've developed something on a par with the original *Worms*. Sure, it looks quite simple and the concept is fairly straightforward, but there's a depth to it that makes it outrageously good fun and downright hilarious. Well, in my opinion.

Wannabe

A game is just not a game without a lightsaber...

George Lucas has a lot to answer for. I'm not talking about Jar Jar Binks or even the *Star Wars Holiday Special*. No, he's instilled a little Jedi-wannabe in all of us, and this is something I felt I had to reflect in *Gibbage*. Special moves that bounce you about the map like Yoda on heat, dodging bullets and pinging you off walls are all present and correct. I'm just trying to work out a way to put lightsabers in it without getting sued.

Part of this hilarity is down to the fact that I've finally put the gibs into *Gibbage*. Reduce your opponent's health to zero and they'll crumble into fleshy little bits like a game of human Jenga. Catch the other player with a well-timed bomb and their various bits and pieces arc gracefully across the sky, leading to a quality of head-bouncing not seen since *Barbarian*. And the cool thing is that when the blood hits the scenery, it stays there for the rest of the game. So after a particularly hefty, sweaty bout of *Gibbage*, you're

running about amid the rotting flesh of the soldiers that fought before you. Ragdolls are out. *Gibbage* is in.

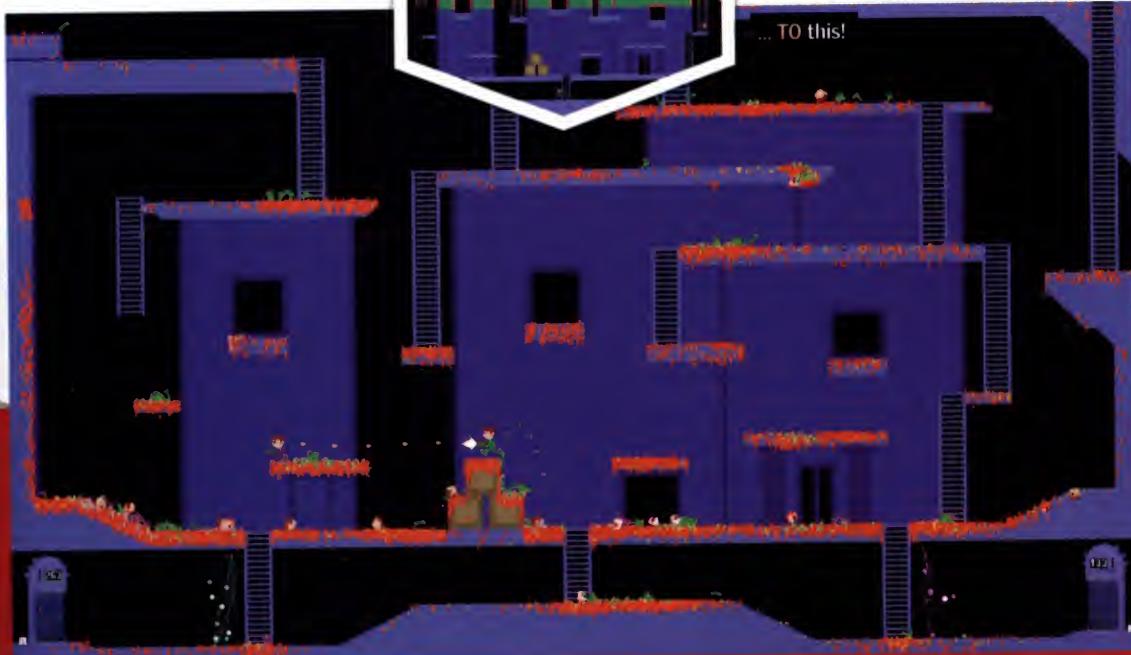
It's full of funny little moments. Not 'insult swordfighting' funny – more that 'unscripted mayhem' funny that makes you laugh until your stomach hurts. Like when you double-jump over one of your opponent's bombs in time to see the explosion fling a mine into his face, resulting in a crimson corpse embedded in the wall.

Success, then. Yes, *PC ZONE*. Yes, Sefton. Yes, the entire gaming public. You can write your own game. What's that? It looks like a turd, the architecture of the single, monochromatic level sucks, and there's no one-player mode, sound effects, menu screens, compatibility or even pause-key? There's no pleasing some people. I'll get on to it... **PCZ**

FROM this...



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www.gamasutra.com

This isn't programming-related as such, but has tons of articles on game design and competing. If, when you're feeling bogged down in code, you need to step back.

www.indiegamer.com

Business slanted, but some important threads nevertheless.

Raiders of the lost arcade



Read this feature and you'll find out:

- That MAME-ing isn't just hurting people with weaponry ✓
- That preserving videogame history is very important ✓
- Which coin-op classics you must play ✓
- Where to download free illegal games ✕

Forgotten retro games are being revived by software enthusiasts across the world. **Pavel Barter** bunks off school to explore the MAME phenomenon

LET'S TAKE A trip down memory lane. Back to the arcade of yesteryear where after blowing your last 10p piloting an X-Wing to destruction, you'd spend the rest of the afternoon peeking over the shoulder of some overweight *Tempest*-obsessed kid with body odour like an ox's bung-hole. Them were the days, but sadly they're no more because now arcades are full of withered gamblers and chavs who want to hit you.

At least PC gamers can relive their glory days at home thanks to MAME, the Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator, that strives to document every retro title released since humans walked on all fours; not just *Galaga* and *Asteroids*, but novelties like

Slap Fight and *Battle Toads*, and everything in between. Such lofty ambitions haven't been seen since the world record attempt of sitting in the biggest bath full of cold baked beans; the following feature is a celebration of this custodian of arcades past.

GAME DEFENDER

Chris Kirmse, one of MAME's top dogs, believes that his role goes beyond that of fanboy. "Preserving old arcade games is critical to understanding how videogames have evolved from the beginnings to today," he says. "Imagine how much film buffs would love to see all the films from the 1900s and 1910s? All these media break down over time, including ROM chips, and the

originals will eventually fail. By emulating these games on modern hardware, MAME can preserve arcade games for all time."

Meanwhile, ageing developers are flattered by their *Oprah*-style makeovers. "The MAME community has single-handedly preserved hundreds, maybe thousands, of games that would have been lost forever. They're more than historians because they actually play the games and aren't just putting them in formaldehyde,"

rages Eugene Jarvis, creator of iconic games like *Defender* and *Robotron: 2084*.

David Crane, the brains behind 1980s hits such as *Pitfall!* and *Ghostbusters*, continues: "The games industry has done a poor job preserving its heritage. The reason for this is no mystery - it's hard



THE devil claims another soul.



Slots to do

The MAME community is one big happy family, just like the Waltons. But it's not all about programming...

Virtual Arcade Cabinets

Peter Vogels (3darcade, mameworld.net): "My job is to digitally preserve the shape and look of the arcade game cabinet. We provide assets for building virtual arcades and give people the opportunity to relive some of the experience of wandering through arcades. My favourite virtual arcade models? *Discs Of Tron*, *Robotron: 2084*, *Missile Command*, *Cockpit* and *Bubbles*."



Arcade Flyer Collections

Dan Hower (www.arcadeflyers.net): "Collecting arcade flyers is a passion for many people for many reasons; mainly it's a connection to the past since most of us grew up with early videogames. You can find old arcade flyers on auction sites, and with the right connections they can be bought in bulk from retired amusement operators. One flyer that I consider a holy grail flyer is *Black Widow* by Atari."



Sometimes you'll be bashing your head on the keyboard and pulling your hair out in frustration

David Haywood, MAME developer



enough to turn a profit in the competitive arena of today's game business, so there's little left to go to preservation."

HISTORY LESSONS

MAME was introduced to the world on February 5, 1997, by Italian programmer, Nicola Salmoria. Unlike other emulator authors, Salmoria also released the source code, attracting developers like zombies to fresh brains. Chris Kirmse: "I heard about it in June 1997, and instantly worked to port it to Windows [at the time, MAME was an extended DOS program]. My port was named MAME32 and I have maintained it ever since then."

MAME can emulate any CPU-based arcade hardware, meaning practically

every game since the mid 1970s is for the taking, although recreating prehistoric blips and bleeps from *Buck Rogers* or *SubRoc-3D* isn't as easy as you might think. Emulation chores can range from child's play to "bashing your head on the keyboard and pulling your hair out in frustration," wails programmer David Haywood, who cites the Sega St-V arcade board in particular as being tougher than a one-eared alley cat.

Neither are MAME tasks for the faint-hearted. One retro fanatic from Ohio, USA, who sports the name of PacDude (well, he is from Ohio), is praised for his emulations of obscure pinball games like Capcom prototype *Big Bang Bar*.

"Typically, I need a good-quality photo of the pinball playfield, photos or scans of plastics used on the table and the apron area," he says of the preparation involved. "Often, photos taken from a typical player's perspective help as well," he adds.

Although MAME has resurrected many arcade classics, there are more to be unearthed. According to Bobby Tribble, a San Francisco-based researcher of un-MAMEed games, most of these undiscovered gems are prototypes which were only out on "field test" for a week or two; then there are the earliest arcade games like *Star Trek* (1972) or *Astro Race* (1973), which didn't have a CPU but instead used decentralised processing. Others are in private collections or rotting in Japanese warehouses. Some, like coin-op *Labyrinth*, may never be rediscovered.

LAW INVADERS

Legally, MAME is given an easier time than abandonware, although its history hasn't been without grief. UltraCade Technologies, who released *Dragons Lair 20th Anniversary Edition* and *Street Fighter Anniversary Edition*, tried to close the door on MAME, claiming its popularity was affecting its sales. But this hissy fit came to nothing, and now MAME is striking deals with other companies to use the technology for their cabinets.

Some chancers try and cash in on MAME, but as far as David

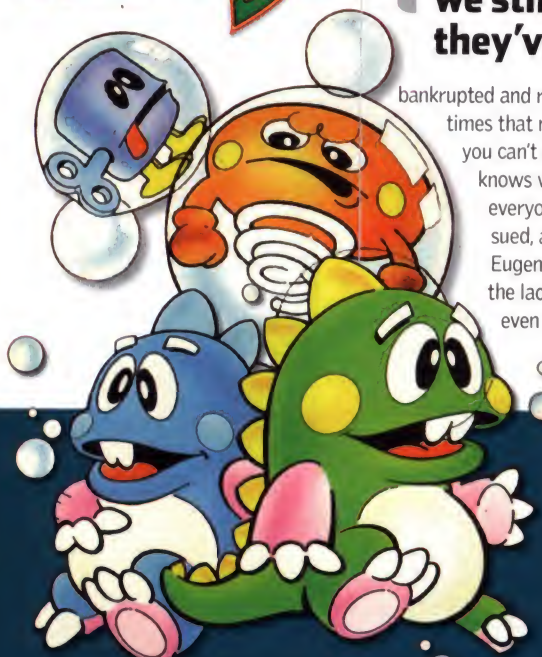
MAME ACADEMY

Reckon you've got what it takes to join the MAME party? Here's how, explains developer David Haywood

"The best way to contribute to MAME is by studying the code, observing how it develops and looking for bugs to fix. There are many preliminary drivers which can be used as a starting point for a developer wishing to contribute, and likewise there are a number of simple drivers which can be useful for working out how MAME works."

Contributions will be judged by long-term developers. It's not rare for them to be rejected as we have fairly high standards, so quite often new programmers don't fully understand our goals and criteria. That said, the team is supportive of new developers and is usually willing to help, providing a certain level of initiative and understanding is shown in the first place."





Haywood and other programmers are concerned, it is strictly for non-commercial use. "We do our best to stop unauthorised use of MAME, and people attempting to illegally profit from it, either directly or indirectly. We certainly do not approve of the 3000-in-1 cabinets full of unauthorised games which some people attempt to sell."

A huge amount of arcade classics are in legal limbo, so while the emulator's work may not be kosher, at least it stomps into places where mainstream publishers tiptoe. "Companies have been

MAME has rescued dozens of titles from this legal quagmire. Developers like Mike Albaugh – *Atari Football*, *Blasteroids* – appreciate it, but believe they deserve a slice of the financial pie. "I like the concept [of MAME], but I have qualms about the IP issues. Not that I or any other game developer will ever get a dime from the official owners of the IP we created."

The MAME machine trundles on, discovering lost classics and recreating forgotten treasures. In an age of near photo-realistic graphics, Hollywood

present in today's music. The same is true of games."

By rescuing retro titles from the dustbin of history, MAME reminds us that even sprites and tinny music can rock our gaming worlds. **PCZ**

In an age of superb graphics, why do we still play these games? Because they've stood the test of time...

bankrupted and re-organised so many times that now there are games you can't publish because no one knows who owns them and everyone is afraid of getting sued, argues *Defender's* Eugene Jarvis. "Because of the lack of publishing rights, even commercially viable games may be lost."

direction, and new-age AI, why do we still play games that look like they were vomited from a halting site skip? "Because many have stood the test of time," reckons Eugene Jarvis.

"It's like music. Take an early rock 'n' roll recording from the 1950s. On a technical basis it's horrible – the microphone sounds like a soup can – but there's a beauty and enthusiasm in the performance, a raw energy that's not



Old flames

So ancient it doesn't break wind it breaks dust, the top 10 MAME games are past-perfect

1 Robotron: 2084 (1982)

Save your family from grunting robots in a flea circus of colourful pixels with two joysticks for serious wrist action. From *Defender* mastermind Eugene Jarvis.

2 Galaga (1981)

The thinking man's *Galaxian* throws space insects and queen bug tractor beams at your feeble earthling wagon.

3 Centipede (1980)

More insects – fleas, spiders, and multi-legged leaf-eaters – in the second best-selling game in Atari history (after *Asteroids*), developed by a lady genius.

4 Street Fighter II (1991)

The beat 'em up – battle against other martial arts practitioners with a fighting system that's both easy to pick up, but a little bit tricky to master.

5 Bubble Bobble (1986)

Guide jolly dinosaurs Bub and Bob through 100 levels to rescue their dino girlfriends and watch a Molly Ringwald film... Probably. Well, it was the 1980s.

6 Defender (1980)

More space and more aliens, only this time with a radar revealing a map of the battlefield and smart-arsed AI.

7 Tempest (1981)

Ooh, technicolor graphics! Spinning around wireframe tunnels and blasting baddies still feels like a bad trip, but you'll sport the migraine with a smile.

8 Pac-Man (1980)

Tohru Iwatani's yellow power-pill chomping pizza pie was a videogame phenomenon. The name comes from the Japanese term *paku-paku*, that describes the sound of eating.

9 Tapper (1984)

Serve root beer (in another version, Budweiser) to thirsty cowboys and marvel at their capacity to drink without the need to urinate.

10 OutRun (1986)

Sega's seminal arcade racer – colourful, great graphics, a fantastic soundtrack and that famous corner-slide all went to make *OutRun* an instant classic.

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STEVE HILL'S NeverQuest



Steve Hill wraps up proceedings in *Guild Wars*

BE AFRAID. BE VERY afraid. If you're a regular reader, you'll be aware of/appalled at last month's *NeverQuest* instalment. In it, I encountered a stalker, who then sent me some photos of herself riding a Space Hopper while wielding a leather whip. It's my own fault really. If I'm going to use my own name and advertise the fact in a national magazine, there's bound to be problems. What's surprising is that this was the first person ever to 'recognise' me. Possibly even more surprising is the fact that another followed immediately.

While attempting to extricate myself from the affections of Lady Elle Semell (of Space Hopper fame), a further beautiful purple-clad woman sashays into view and exclaims: "Steve Hill? THE Steve f***ing Hill!" Eyeing her up, I casually reply: "Yeah, hi."

Hoodimus Yan, for it is she, simply mouths "O_o," whatever that means ('Surprise' – Ed), before welcoming me to the *PC ZONE* Guild. Immediately over-familiar, she then starts referring to me as 'Hill', as if she knows me (which in a way she does). "Less of the Hill," I say, to which she hilariously suggests: "Mountain? Grassy knoll?" "Sir is fine," I curtly suggest.

Lady Elle Semell is still lurking, and as a favour to my two fans, I pose for a picture,

with me standing in between them both. "Beautiful. Me and two sluts," I murmur to no-one in particular. Hoodimus Yan somewhat shatters the mood by announcing: "I'm a Welshman with a beard, want to rethink that phrase?"

There's no way back from that, and I leave them to it, discussing beard trimmers and armour ranking while largely ignoring me. It's more than my ego can take and I log out, sullied by the experience.

ARE FRIENDS ELECTRIC?

It's a full six weeks before I step foot back in Old Ascalon, with a pressing deadline the only incentive. Checking my 'friends' list, I'm relieved to see that Lady Elle Semell is offline. Furthermore, the *PC ZONE* Guild appears to be bereft of activity, with the exception of one Hoodimus Yan, who I've missed by a mere 41 minutes.

With no fans to bait it's actually a bit dull, and despite some impromptu party formations, there's not a great deal of chat. I briefly join up with an elfin ginger-haired girl, but nothing really comes of it and I can't even remember her name.

Tragic though it is, I actually find myself craving the attention of *ZONE* readers. It's hard to perceive of a lower level of fame

(Richard Blackwood notwithstanding), but I appear to have adopted some kind of attitude: do these people

not know how I am? Clearly not, and I log out and do something more interesting instead.

Dipping in intermittently, I fervently check the *PC ZONE* Guild for activity, but the majority of members haven't been online for weeks. Nevertheless, I lurk around Piken Square, desperately hoping to be recognised – like some tabloid-hungry Z-list celebrity – refusing to embark on a quest unless the participants acknowledge my genius.

NEW FACE IN HELL

It's a bit like fishing, sitting around bored out of my mind waiting for a nibble. Past midnight, with the deadline looming, I finally get a bite.

"*PC ZONE*?" inquires the passing Da Beez. "Heh, you finally getting round to some research then?"

I explain the urgency of the situation, and Da Beez correctly surmises: "Christ, you leave it late don't you? We better get going then."

I also point out that I have to review *Football Manager 2006* by the morning, and he tells me how he took Maidenhead United to the heady heights of The Championship in *FM2005*. This isn't the

place for football chat though, as we have hordes of feral beasts to smite. A level 20 Monk – to my level 7 Ranger – Da Beez readily takes me under his wing and leads me into the hinterland of Old Ascalon.

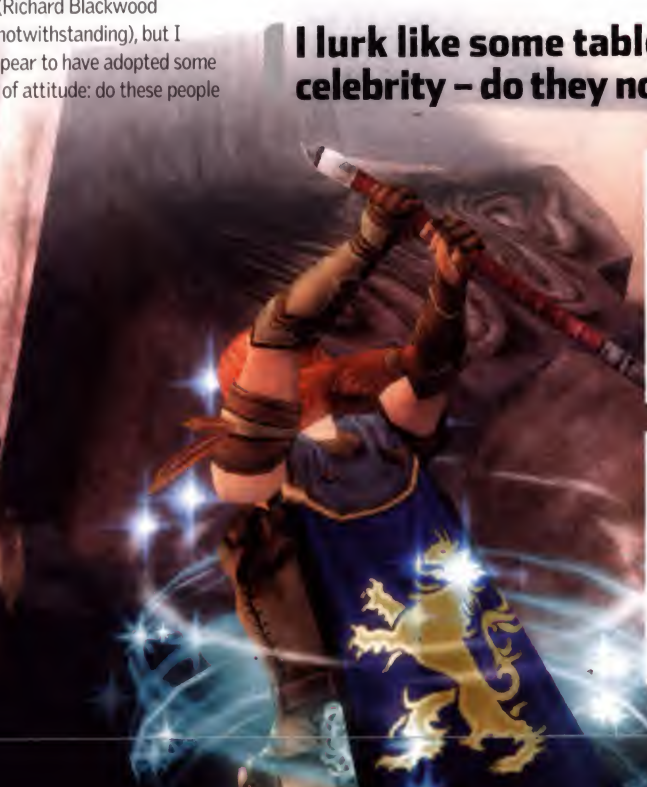
HAMMER OF THE GODS

He's a pleasure to work with, and is packing a hefty arsenal of magic. Using his Shield Of Judgement on me, this enables me to simply wade into a bunch of Stone Elementals and crush them into powder with my Furious War Hammer. If I take a knock, a quick blast of his Healing Breeze sees me back on my feet, with even a touch of Balthazar's Aura thrown in for good measure (no idea).

What was once impossible is now routine, and quests are racked up with aplomb as I reach the heady heights of level 8. We even find time to have something approaching a civilised conversation, and I manage to establish that he works in the cargo centre of Heathrow's Terminal Four.

He seems remarkably normal, and doesn't even offer to send me photos of him straddling a child's toy. That said, he has spent 151 hours playing *Guild Wars*. As for me: 15, all out. **PCZ**

I lurk like some tabloid-hungry Z-list celebrity – do they not know who I am?





Kerry Davis
Jason Deakins
Scott Dalton

SECURITY at Gatwick is tight these days.

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WHEN THE FURORE died down and the original *Half-Life* finally began to sink into the depths of classic gaming history like some enormous, exhausted whale of a game, it created such an undertow that it suggested a sequel was not only desired, but required to fill the vacuum, lest the universe rend itself asunder. So we should all be thankful that Valve was already working hard on its next opus while we were still creeping through the darkened corridors of Black Mesa.

SECOND COMING

And then, after much ado about release dates, online verifications and publishers, *Half-Life 2* finally landed, and forgive the hyperbole, but it was as if the game had come straight from between god's sweaty

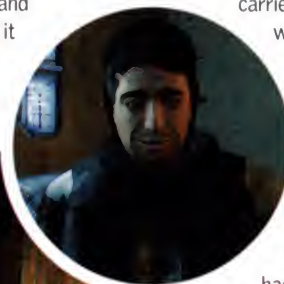
arse cheeks and arrived on our desktops still glowing with holy god residue.

Ignoring the delays, the mixed opinions of the Steam delivery system, the largely unannounced requirement of an Internet connection, the additional delays and the broken content servers, *Half-Life 2*'s release went off without a hitch. If anything, the determination of some gamers merely to get *Half-Life 2* running on their machines, despite the effort required, stands as a testimony to just how much people wanted to get back into Freeman's shoes. There really aren't many other games that could carry such momentum and hype as to single-handedly launch Valve's online distribution service either – on its launch, *Half-Life 2* carried the weight of the gaming world on its shoulders.

It's a weight it carried gracefully, however, rather like a pirouetting Russian ballet dancer with a keg under each arm. Valve's worst enemy was its original creation, and the lofty expectations it had generated among gamers.

Not only was it faced with the challenge of matching the greatness of *Half-Life*, but the developers also had to supersede it – after all, that's what the '2' on the end of the game's name stood for:

ZOMBIES rarely see the funny side.





THE arse end of Brighton beach.



Physics 101

After potential energy, kinetic would probably be our favourite



SAWBLADED! Muahaha!

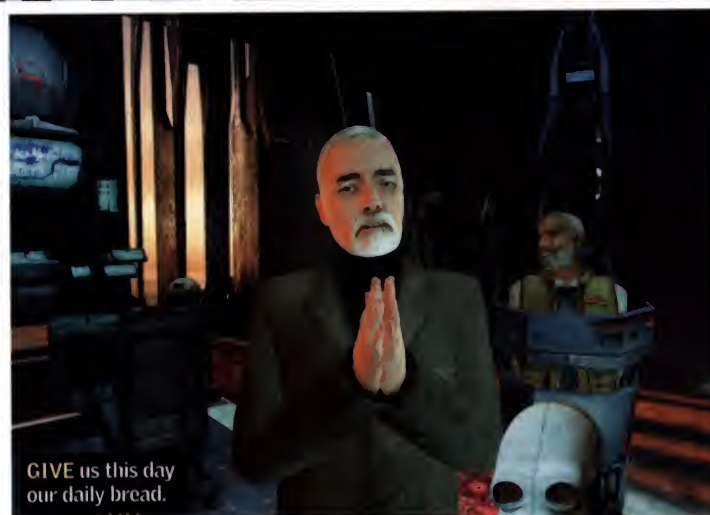
If we'd known that physics could paint zombies white before slicing them in two, we probably would've paid a bit more attention in school. *Half-Life 2's* use of physics has hitherto gone unrivalled in terms of practicality, usefulness and sheer fun, most of which is at the hands of the fantastic gravity gun. Later on this is upgraded, whereupon it ups the ante, allowing you to chuck people about with the gayest of abandon, but unfortunately you can't do this until right near the end of the game. Shame



HARDLY the Ritz!



A nice pair of curtains would do wonders here.



GIVE us this day our daily bread.

progression and evolution. So Valve progressed, and Valve evolved, and Valve delivered. *Half-Life 2* was, and most would agree still is, the best first-person shooter ever created. The game's greatness can't, however, be attributed to any single factor, but is largely down to a few key features.

For a start, *Half-Life 2's* characters are the most lifelike and believable ever encountered in a virtual world. Subtle facial animations, a quick glance, a hand gesture, a panicked movement, compounded by superb acting, it all adds to the emotional connection between you and the collection of pixels on your screen. Then there's the implicit and persistent storyline, constantly hinting at aspects of the *Half-Life* universe, drip-feeding you information about the world around you,

with or without your approval, like the beach landing in *Allied Assault*, or the chainsaw in *Doom*. *Half-Life 2* had an improbable amount of them, proven by the fact that they're so easy to reference: "pick up the can", "wake up, Mister Freeman" and "I think you dropped this back in Black Mesa". And then there's the entire Ravenholm section, the first time you take down a gunship, fire a sawblade, traverse the underside of the bridge, enter the citadel, use the gravity gun. All of which are absolutely brilliant.

BOX OF DELIGHTS

So what are you getting in the *Collector's Edition*? What surprises does the shiny metal tin hold? Closed, it's not all that impressive – shake it and it rattles, hold it close and it's cold, hard and unloving,

initial loveless aura exuded by the closed metal box. *Counter-Strike: Source* is in there, beckoning you to come online and get shot by its many, many avid players, and *Half-Life: Source* is in there as well, trying to think of a reason to get you to play it – it's not a significant improvement over the original game.

No, the real crux of the *Collector's Edition* is a hard, physical copy of *Half-Life 2* to call your own. Placed inside its little metal tomb, it can be stored under your bed far away from Valve and its proprietary online delivery systems and ethereal blobs of intangible data, which are wont to drift away into nothingness at Valve's discretion or your own PC's innate ability to destroy itself at the worst moments.

Half-Life 2 is a treasure, and as such should be treasured – it's up to you whether you think its treasure chest is worth the asking price though. **PC**



THE RAVAGES OF TIME

HALF-LIFE 2	1st
FAR CRY	2nd
FEAR	3rd

OK, so not a whole lot of time has passed and not a lot of ravaging has happened since its release, but *Half-Life 2* is still seeing off newcomers left, right and centre.

On its launch, it carried the weight of the gaming world on its shoulders

striking a balance between keeping you intrigued and keeping you in the dark.

Half-Life 2 is also a game of moments, which burn themselves into your memory

rather like a robot. Opening it isn't a huge improvement, the only real extras being the *Prima Guide* and a T-shirt (which is probably too big for you) – reinforcing the

SUPERTEST

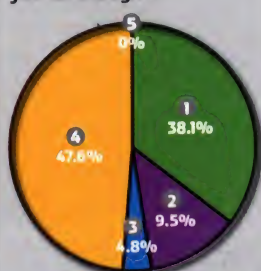
FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

Does *Half-Life 2* still reign supreme in the world of the FPS? This month, the **ZONE** crew decide which shooter rules...



YOUR VIEW

Last month's subject: film-based games. Here's what you all thought...



LEGO STAR WARS 1

LOTR: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH 2

HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN 3

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK 4

THE PUNISHER 5

DarthMorblus: "Riddick is how movie tie-in games should be – a great story that managed to slot perfectly into the *Riddick* universe and allowed you to see where he got his eye-shine from. The stealth kills and reversals were sublime, and the ability to fight with hands and melee weapons was great."

Gilbert: "It's got to be *Lego Star Wars*. It does a great job of following the action sequences in all three films – you can recognise almost every scene."

Doomus: "Film games have too often suffered from being weak attempts to cash in on the market. But by using the game as a prequel, *Riddick* adds something worthwhile to the franchise. A true tie-in, not a mere spin-off: the way film games should be."

Deadmartyr: "Lego *Star Wars* for its focused, simple gameplay, supplemented by the cute, appealing animations and facial expressions. Lego Anakin Skywalker conveyed more thoughts and emotions in three seconds than Hayden ever did in four hours of film."



CALL Of Duty 2: better than *Half-Life 2*?



HALF-LIFE 2: better than *Call Of Duty 2*?



BEFORE WE GET started this month, a quick word about the Scary Games Supertest from issue 160. You may be one of the many who requested an honourable mention for *Clive Barker's Undying*. So just for you, here goes: *Clive Barker's Undying*. OK? Great, let's get on with the matters of the day then.

Shooters! Where would we be without them? If you're Jack Thompson, then we'd all be a lot better off without these foul murder simulations corrupting our kiddiewinks. But if you're in control of your mental faculties, then a world without first-person shooters would be a world without the best computer game of all time. Or *Half-Life 2* (ha ha, just a little satire there).

This month, the **ZONE** team convened around the microphone of justice to

Open the audio file and enjoy our verbal verbosity in its entirety

discuss which of *Half-Life 2*, *Far Cry*, *F.E.A.R.*, *SWAT 4* and *Call Of Duty 2* can lay claim to being the ultimate shooter of the modern age (no prizes for guessing the winner).

You can hear our various viewpoints on the now award-winning podcast (well, we like it) contained on our cover-disc. Just open the audio file in the audio file-opener of your choice, or slip it onto a portable MP3 player and enjoy our verbal verbosity in its entirety.

This month, we were lucky enough to be joined by man-mountain and stalwart of the mag, Martin 'The Kordinator' Korda, forcefully putting his views across and battering into submission anyone foolhardy enough to disagree.

Like always, once you've listened to our badinage, make sure to let us know what you think by heading over to the **PC ZONE** forums at www.pczone.co.uk, seeking out the 'Supertest' thread and voting for your favourite. Leave a comment and we'll print the best next issue. **PC7**



YOU don't have to be mad to work here...



THIS is why we stopped inviting Korda to these things.

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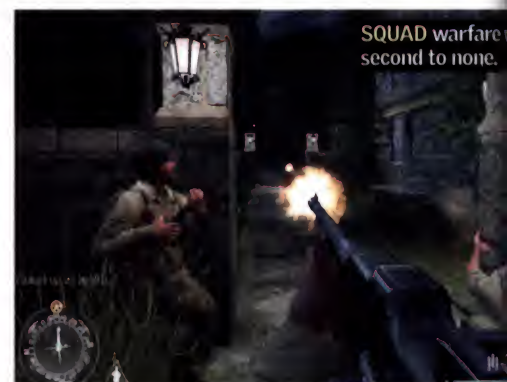
DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

CALL OF DUTY

Following on from *Medal Of Honor*, *Call Of Duty* was the title that took WWII gaming to the next level...



EVER WONDERED WHAT the brains behind your favourite games were thinking during the creation process? Each issue, we sit down with a top developer and pick over the bones of their opus. This month, as its sequel begins to wow the crowds once more (see p48), Infinity Ward president Grant Collier chats about his company's first masterpiece, *Call Of Duty*...



02 SQUAD COMBAT: "*Call Of Duty* was the first time where you had real squad warfare. You had situations with you know, ten on ten, 20 on 20, 100 on 200. You had real large-scale warfare, and I'm proud of how that came together. It set a high benchmark for a lot of games. If you want squad warfare, it's got to be as good as *Call Of Duty* - otherwise, why even bother? I can't think of any other game that has robust squad warfare - certainly not on the same scale."



03 MODDING: "I'm a big fan of the mod community, so we tried to make *COD* as accessible to modding as possible – but the modders just weren't there. They were doing all kinds of mods for *Allied Assault*, but for *Call Of Duty* it wasn't anywhere near the same level. And we made the game much easier to mod than *Allied Assault*... In *AA*, there was nothing – you had to hack the executable to make a mod. So if I could go back and have time to work on the game more, I'd spend it making the game more accessible to the modding masses, with more robust tools."

04 SOLO MISSIONS: "OK, the British missions. The Special Forces solo operations... That sucks. Well, maybe it doesn't suck, but it wasn't good. Every game does that, and what's special about *Call Of Duty* is the mass warfare: 100 guys versus 200 guys, that's what makes *Call Of Duty* special. 'No man fights alone!' That's the motto, and we're sticking to it from now on. There are no more solo missions in *COD2*."



05 HEALTH: "We could have done health better; which is why we've changed it in the sequel. We've watched people play the game: they'll be fighting and fighting and then they'll get down to about ten health and basically stop playing. Then they start backtracking through the level, looking for health packs, and that just kills the action. I really like how we do it in the new game, with no health gauge or anything. Now, you're either dead or alive. It lets you stay in the action longer."



Call Of Duty had real squad warfare for the first time – I'm really proud of that

Grant Collier, director, Infinity Ward

LOOKING BACK COMMENTARY

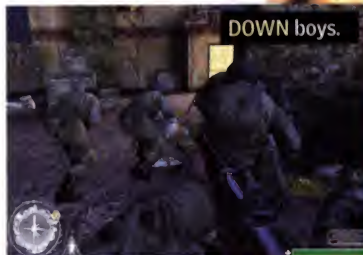


06 AI: "The AI was good, but it could've been better. We knew from the start that while the enemy AI is important, the friendly AI is what you're seeing all the time. So we spent more time on the friendly AI than the enemy. That paid off to a certain extent, because it added a lot to the immersion. But at the same time, the enemies would sometimes just sit in a certain area, and they'd do the whole whack-a-mole thing. They'd just be popping up and firing and you'd just wait for their head to pop up and then shoot them. There's none of that in the new game."

07 SKILL LEVELS: "Some people say they can complete *Call Of Duty* in eight hours, but they're playing it on Easy... If I was in god mode, I could get through it in three hours – it's just not an accurate representation of how long it takes to play. If you're a veteran gamer, go for the veteran skill level – simple."

"We try to make games that appeal to the hardcore and to the mass-market, and there are a lot of people who don't play a lot of videogames who are just terrified. I see people on the easiest difficulty level, they're just on their bellies crawling through the level, trying to shoot guys from a mile away. And I'm like, 'oh my god dude, just get up and f***ing butt the guy with your rifle!'"

"You have to cater for both types and that's where the difficulty level comes in. We're talking about trying to do something where we gauge your skill level through how you play and then having a ramping difficulty level. Maybe next time."



08 GLORY DAYS: "Some of our favourite things in *COD* are the little things. For example, because we spent so much time on the Allied behaviour, there are a lot of neat things that would happen. I remember a story from our lead designer, Zied Rieke. He tried to throw a grenade through a window and it hit the side of the building and bounced back. One of his buddies went into glory mode and jumped on the grenade for him and saved his life. And he's like, 'I f***ing love that guy. He gave his life to allow me to keep playing.' Whenever a grenade is thrown they usually run, but there's a small chance that they'll throw themselves on it. And stuff like that happens because we spent so much time on the AI for the friendlies. The German AI wouldn't do that though. They're not willing to give their lives for their comrades."



Some people who worked for the US government had 64-player games, which was just wicked

Grant Collier, director, *Infinity Ward*

UFOs were a constant in the original COD too. Probably.



THEY all took a moment alone with their thoughts.

09 GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GAME:

"Greatest achievement. Hmmm... I gotta pick something where I don't sound f***ing arrogant, you know? I feel that we sort of raised the bar for first-person shooters across the board. Which is a good thing for gamers... Hang on, that really sounds arrogant. 'Our game is so good, other developers have to work much harder.' That's f***ing arrogant. Let's talk about something else."

NOW there's a question for you.



Sgt. Moody
Submachine Gunner

Objective completed.

Ok Captain, assuming that we get back to battalion in this rolling junkyard, what do I tell 'em?

8 | 120

"I say old chap, good shot!"



Objective updated.

141 | 142

11 MULTIPLAYER:

"I'm really proud of the multiplayer. We were concerned with how the multiplayer would be perceived, because we weren't trying to do a million things. We wanted to have the best infantry combat multiplayer game and we wanted to do it with four sides and have it balanced for all four sides - Germans, Russians, British and Americans. We did that and luckily everyone loved it - they really embraced the COD multiplayer. Everyone is so feature-centric - you know: 'Where's your vehicles, where's your ragdoll physics, why are you using Quake 3 Engine instead of Half-Life 2?' PC gamers are very hard to please, but luckily they liked it."

PCZ

10 SMOOTH NET CODE: "One of our goals was to make a game that had really smooth Net code, so we could have a lot of players in there. Plus, we wanted to have a competitive platform for multiplayer tournaments. The problem was COD was very animation-rich, and huge packet transfers were going on all the time. But we did a really good job, making it a fun platform to game on, and it could also be used as a competitive platform."

"We only officially supported 32 players, but it's hard-coded at 64 players - we had 64-player games that were just insane. There were some people that worked at the US Government who had 64-player servers set up, which was wicked. They were tapping into the fibre backbone, the United States Internet backbone, and that's unlimited bandwidth. And these guys were worried because the packet transfers were so high that they were passing a terabyte of information in one month (1,000GB). In the end, they had to tone it down to 50 players. But that was some of the most fun I've ever had on a computer."



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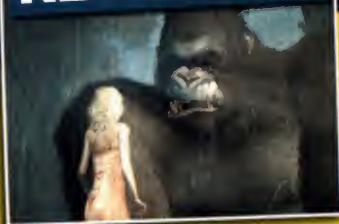
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DOMINIK DIAMOND

Sorry, what? I'm meant to use this bling PC to play a game and not just to fiddle with *Virtually Jenna*? I'll get right on it. No problem. No problem at all...

At least playing a videogame for seven days halted my porn addiction. Temporarily

LIFE IS FULL of surprises dear reader: fivers will turn up in old coat pockets, that girl in the office will decide not to press charges after the Xmas party and I will finally use this column to talk properly about games.

OK. Enough dicking around with porn and 'ironic' reviews of *Minesweeper*. This month I'm writing about *Far Cry*. Why? Well for me, the first-person shooter is the definitive PC gaming genre. And it's the only f***ing game I've been sent since I started on this magazine.

I haven't completed many games on the PC in the last few years because I couldn't allow myself to start them. They're evil. Seriously. Horrible, addictive things. They

can take over your whole life. Oh, I know I spent a lot of time during the '90s defending videogames from boot-faced haridans who smelt of kelp and were intent on claiming they were 'the new smack'. Well, I lied. The haridans were correct, of course. Videogames are so addictive I used them to wean myself off heroin. I even sold my grandmother to a small independent retailer so I could get *Champ Man 3*. And even then I had to wait until it was released on the Sold Out label.

SLIPPERY SLOPE

On the occasions when I *did* start a PC game, then that was it. Life over. I would slip some Rohypnol in Mrs D's Bacardi,

shut the kids in a cellar with a family-pack of Hula Hoops and a Rubik's Cube, and stick on *Max Payne*. I would emerge a week later to the most almighty bollocking from the missus, who was unconvinced by my argument that at least by playing a videogame solid for seven days I had temporarily halted my porn addiction.

FAR OUT

But I realised that I couldn't write this column without opening Pandora's DVD drive at some point, so out came *Far Cry*. First, can I say how smoothly the game played on my Alienware PC? And how crisp it looked on my pimpalicious NEC Monitor? And with the pimped-up combo of Saitek gaming keyboard and Saitek mouse, it sho' played like a Mack Daddy. 'Pon my word, I've gone all 'hood' on you. I apologise. (I'm still using speakers the size of pencil sharpeners by the way - so remember, next month this space could be used to whore YOUR sound equipment.)

But from the moment I awoke in an old Japanese bunker I was hooked quicker than a crack-whore's newborn. Filming on my *At Home With The Diamonds* TV show ground to a halt as I feigned avian flu to maintain my gaming quarantine. I trained my digestive system to accept my own waste as nutrients. Nothing was going to stop me killing every mercenary and mutant on those islands.

WHERE FOR ART THOU?

Until, that is, I lost the game. Three levels from the end. Slightly stuck on an annoying 'drive-between-two-bits-shooting-people-from-the-back-of-your-vehicle' bit, I cried myself to sleep. When I awoke, the game had just disappeared. A week on, I *still* can't find it.

You can't comprehend how frustrating this is unless you're a one-armed man hanging off a cliff with itchy tits. Maybe someone took it. The director of the telly show? Maybe Jamie Sefton came round and stole it himself? All I know is it wasn't Mrs D or the kids. They've already left me. **FW**



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